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ABSTRACT

This monograph is the result of an ethnographic study, conducted between 1981 and 1982, to explore the social conditions under which migrant and seasonal farm workers and their families lived and their children were socialized. The study was conducted in a large agricultural county in New Jersey. At the time of the study, the county had slightly more than 600 farms, involving 400 full-time and 240 part-time operators. These farms employed approximately 10,000 farm workers each year, including both seasonal and migrant farm workers. Among the migrants, single Puerto Rican men constituted the largest proportion. Other major migrant groups included Mexicans, Blacks, and Filipinos. The first chapter presents several biographical profiles of farm workers, describing their lives in considerable detail. These biographies reflect the events, social conditions, and problems farm workers confronted. The second chapter looks at the prominent characteristics of migrant and seasonal life, described as "situation-centered" as a result of insecure and unpredictable living conditions. The third chapter focuses on the socialization that farm workers' children underwent with regard for their social and physical environments and parents' attitudes toward schooling. The fourth chapter discusses the experiences of migrant children, difficulties resulted from mobile life conditions, lack of cultural capital, communication barriers, and the attempts made by educators to meet the special learning needs of this population. The fifth chapter offers concluding remarks and explores an alternative perspective and framework for migrant education. This document contains extensive references. (LP)

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SEASONAL LIFE

FARMWORKERS, CHILDREN AND SOCIALIZATION

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 1

Chapter I: Profiles of Farm Workers..... 12

Chapter II: Situation Centeredness..... 75

Chapter III: Farm Workers' Children..... 120

Chapter IV: Migrant Children and Education... 152

Chapter V: Concluding Remarks..... 234

Bibliography..... 266

Introduction

The purpose of this monograph is first to explore the social conditions under which migrant and seasonal farm workers and their families live and then to examine the education of farm workers' children in that special context of migrant and seasonal life. We have written the monograph primarily for socially concerned Americans, policy makers, administrators, and those educators and teachers of more than a million migrant children who share our interest. It is based upon an ethnographic study whose integrity lies in its limited scope.

The infrastructure and social structure of our society determine both the position of farm workers in that society and the schooling available to their children. In other words, the economic structure that produces cheap farm labor and the social structure that controls farm workers' access to social resources, including job opportunities, determine their placement in society and the problems they must cope with. This monograph will expose the reader to these dimensions of experience that shape today's farm workers. It is imperative that we understand their children's socialization and schooling in the light of this background that influences their behavior and motivational orientation toward schoolwork and society. The structural conditions of life--the social conditions patterned over an extended

period of time--control children's behavior and the cognitive dimensions of activity, exerting a powerful influence on their socialization and the development of adaptive behavior.

In the past, theories have been developed to promote the education of migrant children, including seasonal children. Among them are cultural deprivation, cultural conflict, the lack of educational opportunity, and institutional deficiency. These theories are partially supported by empirical evidence, but they cannot cogently account for the deep-seated problems of these children, which are based in the structural conditions of their very lives. These children are culturally deprived in the sense that many of them have not been wholly acculturated into the dominant culture of society, which has created cultural conflicts, particularly for Puerto Ricans and Mexicans. Undoubtedly, these children cannot take full advantage of educational opportunities, even when they are offered, if their environment fosters disruption and perpetual discontinuity instead of the consistency in guidance and orientation needed. As institutions have recognized their own deficiencies, they have tried to meet the needs of children more effectively. Their efforts have produced migrant education that often involves both current and former migrants, recruiting migrant children, bilingual

instruction, summer school, health services, and the Migrant Student Record Transfer System.

These institutional efforts are welcome and commendable. But they constitute at best only a partial response to the problems of farm workers' children. Greater effectiveness can be achieved by paying simultaneous and equal attention to the structural conditions of the lives of these children.

We hope, through this monograph, to help the reader become critically aware of these conditions and the existing social situation to which farm workers and their families are subject. If many of the children of farm workers are to become active participants in social mobility, the situationally determined conditions that constrain their lives need to be radically changed.

National and international economics now produce a pool of surplus labor, manifestly subject to exploitation, and farm workers come from that pool. Their employment is contingent upon a variety of factors, including crops, seasons, weather, the labor market, the availability of transportation and accommodation, and the national economy. The one constant in farm laborers' lives is inconstancy, and this fact predisposes them to situation-centered lives. Dependency on a situation-centered life leads to an irregular income and to poverty. It also leads to transiency, a major characteristic of migrants that produces

an absence of social and personal identity and marginality. The relative absence of distant goals and the predominance of present-time orientation are equally significant attributes of situation-centered life. Taken together these characteristics control farm workers' lives and insidiously influence their children's behavior, attitudes, and adaptation to school.

We conducted our research in the largest agricultural county of an eastern state. Called "Garden County" hereafter, it has recently become one of the most intensive vegetable producing counties in the east, producing, on 30,000 acres, between April and November, nearly 50 percent of the vegetable crops grown in the state. Its leading cash crops include: asparagus, cucumbers, eggplant, iceberg lettuce, green cabbage, onions, peppers, potatoes, snap beans, tomatoes, and Romaine and Boston lettuce, among others.

Garden County has slightly more than 600 farms involving 400 full-time and 240 part-time operators. These farms employ approximately 10,000 farm workers each year, including both seasonal and migrant workers. The number of farm workers employed has steadily declined in the past fifteen years, as agricultural mechanization has been introduced to make farming more efficient and to reduce labor costs. For example, one farmer who grows vegetables on his 750 acres, employs 85 workers at the peak of the

agricultural season. He estimated that he would need at least 250 workers if he did not use machines to pick his beans and cucumbers. One cucumber picker replaced 30 workers.

Among the migrants single Puerto Rican men currently constitute the largest proportion. More than 3,500 Puerto Ricans are transported to the county and its vicinity every year through an association of farmers. Recruited in Puerto Rico with the cooperation of the Puerto Rican government, they come to the county under contract. Previously their number reached as high as 12,000 a year. Other major migrants are Mexicans, blacks, and Filipinos, who migrate to the county either with or without their families, although Filipinos are by and large single. Puerto Rican migrant families often move up to the county with the eastern stream of migrants, largely from Florida. In contrast to these ethnic groups, there are comparatively very few white American migrants.

Added to these farm migrants are the local seasonal workers, many of whom are former migrants now permanently residing in local communities in the county. These workers represent a variety of ethnic groups, including those mentioned above.

Historically, Italians were the predominant farm workers in Garden County up to the time of the Great Depression. Later some of them became successful farmers

and, in fact, many farmers in the county today are of Italian descent. Blacks and Indians replaced the Italians and supplied the largest portion of farm labor until the end of World War II. Within ten years after World War II, blacks predominated and established a reputation as hard and reliable workers. Subsequently in the late 1950s and 1960s Puerto Ricans and Mexicans became the major source of labor, replacing blacks. By the 1970s, the county employed a combination of blacks, Puerto Ricans, and Mexicans to provide farm labor; the Puerto Ricans especially became a major part of the labor force in the county.

For our project, we focused upon migrant and seasonal workers, single and married, and their families in Garden County. They are scattered throughout the entire county, and their children are served by eight school districts.

We employed primarily ethnographic methods to gather in-depth data. Preliminary research started in November 1979, when we made a dozen visits to the farm workers' corporation in the county. This is a nonprofit organization, supported with state and federal funds, whose primary responsibility is to assist migrant and seasonal workers to secure stable employment other than temporary farm work. Otherwise it attends to a variety of miscellaneous matters involving health, financial assistance, nutrition, general welfare, and emergencies. The personnel of the corporation we consulted included the

director, and executive assistant, area representatives, recruiter-counselors, and coordinators, among others. We also conducted seminars to gain insight into our research problem to which we invited former migrants, educators of migrant children, and administrators of migrant education. During the preliminary research period, we also devoted a couple of months to constructing a six-page interview guide.

This project was proposed by Eliane Condon, Director of the Institute of Intercultural Relations and Ethnic Studies, Rutgers University, which had been involved in the development of migrant education and ethnic studies. The Institute was mainly interested in gaining in-depth information relative to farm workers, migrants, and migrant children. The research team originally comprised four members of the Institute--Eliane Condon, Vera Federov, Max Galvin and Nila Nicolas--and two other researchers--Nobuo K. Shimahara, of the Department of Social and Philosophical Foundations, and his doctoral student, Marguerete Schlag. In a later phase of the research, Nicolas and Schlag withdrew from the project, but Edward Campbell, a school superintendent, joined the team as a local consultant. Under Shimahara's direction, the research team moved to Garden County in May 1980 and began the ethnographic study, which continued through the summer, concentrating on observation and intensive interviews.

To facilitate the research, we established our project headquarters near Garden County, and it simultaneously served as our residence during the entire period of study. Our physical proximity was crucial for observation and interviews, for it enabled us to visit farm workers and their families relatively easily and to maintain close relationships with our informants. Data emphasizing children were collected during the summer of 1981 by the same team following the same procedures.

Identifying informants was our most difficult task. It was especially hard to locate migrant and seasonal farm workers because of their transiency. To find migrants, we visited most of the labor camps in the county with the assistance of personnel at the farm workers' corporation. We sought assistance from social workers, home-school liaisons, and farmers in identifying seasonal workers and learning their residences. We also obtained lists of migrant children from school boards in the county, and these were especially useful in determining their residences. No institution or office had reliable information on farm workers, however, and we had to compile our own list of workers and their families based on our visits to the labor camps and various information given us by the aforementioned personnel and farmers.

Another difficult problem was to gain the farmworkers' cooperation for interviews. It was impossible to take a

systematic sampling of informants, such as the stratified sampling normally used to achieve the best representation of a group to be studied. After we had completed our list of farm workers' labor camps and homes, we visited the workers there repeatedly to seek their cooperation. Though farm workers were more often than not cordial to us and expressed varying degrees of interest in our study, few of them agreed to interviews. They were not available during the day unless there was rain or no crop to be harvested. Some were overtly hostile to us. Even some who agreed to interviews had gone when we returned. Furthermore, the notion of appointment was quite foreign to most of the farm workers, and we could not convince them of its utility. Even when they gave us appointments, they usually failed to keep them.

After repeated trial and error, we secured thirty-seven men and women as our regular informants, twenty-five of whom lived with their families. To conduct interviews, we rarely made appointments, but instead visited their camps and homes in the late afternoons and evenings, when they were back from the fields. On rainy days or when they were idle for other reasons, we visited them in the mornings and early afternoons. Adapting ourselves to their activities and convenience was crucial to receiving their continuous cooperation. In addition to farm workers, we also interviewed farmers and personnel of the farm workers' corporation, a hospital, and two police departments.

During the second summer, our research on the children of farm workers progressed more smoothly, and we collected data from interviews with a minimum of twenty-five families. Meanwhile, data regarding migrant children's schooling were being collected by members of the Institute of Intercultural Relations and Ethnic Studies during the 1979-81 school years. During that period, they visited a minimum of a dozen schools in the county and interviewed teaching and administrative personnel.

This monograph consists of five chapters. The first chapter presents some biographical profiles of farm workers, describing their lives in considerable detail. These biographies reflect the events, social conditions, and problems farm workers in general confront. The second chapter looks at the salient characteristics of migrant and seasonal life, which may be seen as a set of responses to the structural conditions of life. These two chapters define the social context of farm workers' lives, as well as the environment in which their children grow up. In the third chapter attention is focused on the socialization that the children of farm workers undergo with regard for their social and physical environments and parents' attitudes toward schooling. The context of social life unique to farm workers' children is explored in detail. In the fourth chapter we discuss the experiences of migrant children, their relationship to schooling, and the attempts which have

been made by educators to meet the special learning needs of this population. Socialization and schooling are assessed particularly in the context of farm workers' lives presented in the first two chapters. All our data pertinent to these chapters are presented here; other data gathered during our project are published elsewhere. The fifth chapter integrates the foregoing discussion and offers concluding remarks based on observations in the body of the research. We conclude the chapter by exploring an alternative perspective and framework for migrant education.

One final remark: The meaning of experience is context-dependent. When context is stripped from experience, experience loses its meaning. Therefore, we emphasize the context in which events and problems occur. To protect the integrity of context, we employ a concretizing mode of describing experience. It focuses on particular aspects of experience by paying specific attention to concrete problems and other ideographic events in order to gain insight into the meanings of the experiences that reflect the lives of migrants and seasonal people. The concretizing mode of description leads to the development of concepts sensitized and informed by particulars. Such concepts can shed light upon generalized dimensions of experience. Accordingly, we present sensitizing concepts in order to appreciate broader implications of particular experience.

Chapter I

Profiles of Farm Workers

In this chapter, we draw upon our studies of a number of farm workers to present profiles that represent both seasonal and migrant laborers and their families. To a significant extent, these profiles reveal common attributes characteristic of the lives and conditions of all such laborers in Garden County.

The first profile features the experience of Roberto, a Mexican-American who was recruited in Mexico and came to Garden County to work for the first time. It discloses how some Mexicans are recruited for farm work and the conditions under which they work. Francisco's family constitutes the second profile. A migrant family in the stream that flows between Florida and the northeastern states, it illustrates intergenerational continuity in migrant work and how migrant families adapt to transient situations. Also presented in this chapter are two black families. One is the Jackson family, which depends exclusively on seasonal work to earn a living for the husband and wife and eight children. The second is the Washington family, which was recently engaged in seasonal work. Marginality, poverty, and uncertainty about the future are major concerns of the Washingtons.

Roberto

Trip to Garden County

Mexican farm laborers who seek employment in the United States converge in Mexicali. Located near the border, Mexicali is crowded with transient laborers from all over northwestern Mexico. According to one estimate, nearly 18,000 Mexicans gather there every year, for they know recruiters for American farms regularly visit to enlist seasonal help for jobs in California, Arizona, New Mexico, and, sometimes, more distant states.

Roberto, one of our chief informants, was one of those Mexicans. On the afternoon of April 15, 1980, while standing on a street corner with a group of men, he heard of a Guamanian recruiter who was looking for about two dozen laborers. Roberto and some of the others who were interested pursued the matter and were directed to meet Jose, a Filipino crew leader, outside Mexicali. No sooner had they reached Jose's temporary home, than his Mexican wife rushed out urging them to come inside quickly. She warned them that immigration officials might come if they were seen outside the house. As they had already obtained legal permits to cross the border, they were puzzled by her unusual behavior. Inside the house, they met not only Jose, but also about ten young men sitting on the floor. Roberto

soon understood that those young Mexicans had just been recruited surreptitiously and that they did not have visas.

Jose promised the men that a large farm in Garden County in the East would need at least seven three-man teams of lettuce workers and that they would be expected to harvest 5,000 boxes of lettuce every day. Roberto figured that he would be able to make an average of $120 a day. Immediately he agreed to work for Jose for a couple of months without a contract, as did the other men. Subsequently each man received $20 in cash for the trip. Roberto simply assumed that it was for refreshments and cigarettes during the trip. But, "No!" he and the other men were told, "This money has to last you for three days and three nights for everything including your food." They were intimidated enough not to ask further questions and waited for the time of departure, this episode having begun about three o'clock. The recruiter's attitude toward them led Roberto to become apprehensive of him and his promise, but he did not change his mind because he needed a job as soon as possible.

It was already 8:00 p.m. Time passed quickly as the twenty-four Mexicans who were newly recruited drank beer and began to get acquainted with each other. Some told jokes, recalling past trips, and some talked about the wives and children they would leave behind. At 2:00 a.m. everyone was told to start loading the cars. Obviously, the crew leader

had chosen this time of night to cross the boarder. Four sedans, two station wagons, and one van, provided by Jose, were waiting outside. The Guamanian drove the van and led the other cars, which were driven by five other Filipinos and one Mexican. Five men rode in each car.

They crossed the border without incident around three o'clock in the morning, when it was still very dark and no one else was on the road. They continued the tiring trip, day and night, taking turns driving. At the end of the second day, the allocation of $20 was spent. They had to contribute all their additional pocket money in order to buy food. On top of that, one car broke down and had to be abandoned in Tennessee. As Roberto recalled, that was the worst trip he ever made. Somehow, however, the whole crew arrived at the destination around 5:00 a.m. on April 29. Jose, the crew leader, was already there, having traveled by air.

Roberto and five other crew members were given a large single room, the end unit of a long barracks, for their accommodation. They were so exhausted that they lay down immediately on the unclean, worn-out, hard mattresses placed on steel bed frames. Fortunately, each had carried a blanket with him from Mexico, for on that chilly morning no sheets and blankets were provided for them. They did not get much rest, however; they were suddenly awakened at 9:00 a.m. and ordered to report to the kitchen. They washed and

shaved for the first time in three days and had their first meal at the labor camp. Coffee, rolls, and doughnuts were served. During breakfast, Roberto discovered that there were eight other Mexicans in the camp who were recruited elsewhere. Hence, that camp accommodated a total of thirty-eight men, including thirty-one Mexicans, five Filipinos and two Guamanians.

Labor Camp

At 10:00 a.m. the Guamanian who served as recruiter showed up in the kitchen and commanded them to get on a truck, so that he might show them the field in which they would work. When they were taken to the field, Roberto saw nothing but asparagus. He was puzzled and asked why they were not picking lettuce. The Guamanian shouted at Roberto and said that the lettuce was not ready yet. Roberto said to himself "Work is work" and decided not to make a further fuss about it. The workers picked asparagus until 7:00 p.m. They repeated the same work for four days, through Friday, without ever even seeing lettuce.

The Guamanian became the foreman for the entire crew. Roberto could not understand why he shouted at crew members each time he approached them. One day, he told them that he had a black belt in karate and would leave his mark on the offender if any one of them stepped out of line. Roberto's friend, who knew the foreman better, advised Roberto to ignore his behavior. He, the friend explained, tried to

threaten young workers, most of whom were illegal and helpless laborers, so as to exert maximum control over them.

Friday was the first payday, and everyone was waiting for it. Few had even pocket money left after the long trip from Mexico. Finally, in the late afternoon, each received a little brown envelope containing cash. Roberto did not bother to look at the description of his income written on the face of the envelope; he immediately opened it. To his surprise and deep dismay he found only $24.38. "Damn it. Something is wrong," he said to himself. As he was trying to recall how many hours he worked that week, his friends approached him with invariable disappointment and showed him their own envelopes. Without much discussion, they decided to talk to the foreman, who also did the bookkeeping. With a coarse and angry voice, he told them that the gross pay for each man was more, but that the net pay became less because of deductions for food, taxes, and other expenses. He wasted no time in turning them away by stating that they would get more the following week. No further questions, he said, would be entertained.

Roberto's frustration, like that of the other crew members, was not completely repressed. When he calculated how much he made an hour, his wage came to $1.50, even less than the minimum wage of $3.10. He recalled that he used to earn $5.00 at least when he did hourly work in California. As they picked asparagus the next week, crew members

proposed to the foreman that he measure each parcel of asparagus and count the number of parcels that they picked. There was no way he replied, to measure the quantity of asparagus, and sternly told them to leave the camp if they did not like the work. He even warned the young illegal workers at the camp that he would call "Migra," his shortened identification for an immigration officer to arrest them. Consequently, five men decided to leave the camp and took off within a day. They were later seen, for a while, on a nearby farm. Several other men left for home as soon as their relatives sent money for the return trip, but nobody knew exactly where they went.

Meanwhile Roberto's pay increased by only $15 at the end of the second week. His pay envelope for the third week contained $50 and some nickels. Still the crew was picking asparagus instead of lettuce. Roberto realized that he was being cheated by Jose, the crew leader who had promised that he would earn more than $100 a day. In the fourth and fifth weeks, the crew was told to pick spinach. Knowing nothing else to do, the crew went out to harvest spinach. Each man was paid 50 cents per box, and he could manage to pick only three boxes an hour.

By that time, Roberto was thoroughly disgusted and even thought about leaving the camp. One day in the fifth week, he and other men refused to continue picking spinach. As soon as the son of the farmer heard about that, he rushed to

the field in his pickup truck and demonstrated his outrage by swinging a belt and a stick in all directions. Though some were frightened, Roberto and the other older men took this event calmly.

The Mexican workers' frustration was intensified by their discontentment with other aspects of their life. Even though most of the crew were Mexicans, the Filipino cooks prepared only Filipino meals. For example, a meal that consisted of lamb chops cooked in vinegar was served three times the first week. Mexican workers rarely touched the meal, though they did not loudly voice their displeasure. On top of that there were no radios, TV sets, or games at the camp. For a while, they could not even purchase beer, for they did not have money. Roberto felt as if he were a slave whose freedom, needs, and rights were entirely defined by his owner.

Roberto and the older Mexican workers were discussing quitting when one of them recalled that in similar circumstances, he had received legal assistance from the migrant legal service office in the county. He soon got in touch with that office, which sent an aide the following day. That evening, the several men who chose to talk to the aide met him clandestinely in an empty building at the labor camp. No young men were involved; they had no choice but to acquiesce in the low wages and other conditions because of their illegal status, which they did not want known by

anyone outside the camp. Roberto and his companions described their complaint to the aide in full detail. Two days later he and his boss returned to the same place to discuss the grievance. Toward the end of that meeting, the aide's boss suggested to Roberto that the workers had a good case against Jose, the crew leader. He told them that he had heard many grievances against him in the past few years. But no one, he said, had the courage to sign the forms for grievance. Workers were afraid of Jose's retribution against them. Incidentally, Jose and his foreman had been working for that farmer for ten years; hence, their names had long been known by the legal aide.

The legal aides explained their rights to the men and asked if they were willing to sign grievance forms prepared for them. After consulting with each other, three men, including Roberto, decided to sign them. The two other men present at the meeting declined to sign lest they lose their jobs at the camp. Roberto was not angry with them for their lack of commitment, but, instead, sympathized with them. He hoped sincerely that the legal aides would act promptly to rectify the injustice so rampant in the camp. After more than a week had passed, Roberto had heard nothing from them, so he thought, "These things would take time."

One of the cosigners, Rodriguez, recalled having a bitter experience with Jose's foreman in 1978. He had bought a car from the foreman for $2,000, and within a month

or so, it broke down. Although he spent $600 for repairs, it was not driveable. Finally, he appealed to the legal services to assist him, and that resulted in retrieving $1,500 from the foreman.

It was obvious to Roberto that Jose and his close subordinates, including the foreman, two Filipino cooks, and another Guamanian who drove a tractor, conspired to usurp the income that should have been paid to the Mexicans. He learned that the foreman was paid $400 a week and that the other subordinates were also paid well. When the workers appealed to the farmer, the real boss, to intervene, he told them that Jose was their superior and that they should have approached him. Though the farmer and Jose talked with each other every day, the farmer pretended not to know anything about the concerns expressed by the workers. Roberto concluded that it would be simply futile to speak with the farmer. After all, he was the real boss and may have designed the whole scheme.

Although their disappointment and frustration continued, Roberto and his four roommates tried to maintain a degree of composure and to relax in the evening whenever possible. Having received their pay, though small, they went to the nearest bar to buy beer, and they also purchased cards and dice. Drinking is often a big problem for many workers at labor camps, but his roommates, who were all about 40 years of age, drank moderately. A couple of times,

however, he and they got thoroughly drunk. That, he said, was good to forget his anxiety and loneliness.

Two men in the next room got drunk once every two days. They were hard workers, and drinking never affected their work, but they were anonymous men. Though Roberto regarded them as his friends, he never asked if they had relatives to depend on or families to support or where they came from. Some young workers occasionally smoked marijuana, not necessarily because they liked it, but probably because they wanted to repress feelings of depression. Marijuana smoking, however, was never a big problem at the camp. Occasionally Roberto and his friends played cards and dice for low stakes, because there was nothing else to do. Some camps in California, where he had worked previously, had music boxes, TV sets, radios, and even pool tables, but this particular camp provided none of them. For Roberto, it was almost impossible to relax at the camp except by drinking beer.

In the sixth week, Roberto decided to leave for California without having picked lettuce and without knowing the status of his grievance. He knew there was no hope for improvement at the camp. When he left, each of us contributed $10 for his trip. Incidentally, we learned later in the summer that the farmer was under investigation.

Union Involvement

Probably Roberto was the most articulate man among the Mexican workers at the camp, though he had meager formal education. He could not speak English despite having worked in the United States for a number of years. Yet he was also a more insightful man than others, so that he could clearly define the relationship between the farmer and the workers and that between the crew leader and the crew members. He did not acquiesce in what he saw as gross injustice.

Roberto started to work as a seasonal farm worker in the United States nineteen years ago. He worked with men of different ethnic groups, including Filipinos, Japanese, Puerto Ricans, and Jamaicans. Though he could not compare these ethnic groups in terms of their work and reliability, he knew well that crew leaders were the worst no matter what ethnic groups they might belong to. In his words, "When it comes to crew leaders, most of them will try to eat you up alive." The same, he continued, applied to some farmers. The most serious problem that farm workers confronted in the past, in Roberto's view, was the exploitation and manipulation by farmers and crew leaders usually loyal to them, but adverse to workers. This pattern of servitude had been maintained for many decades. Roberto insisted that farm workers were not rewarded for the work they accomplished. In other words, their rights to claim just rewards were not only denied, but also simply not thought

about. The worker's total subordination to the farmer and the crew leader was taken for granted and not called into question until recently.

But, Roberto pointed out, such a relationship of subordination began to be modified under the influence of Cesar Chavez around the middle of the 1960's. Chavez's slogan was "La Union Hace la Fuerza (union gives strength). During the early 1970's he watched with great interest the union movement in California initiated by Chavez. As Chavez was launching a statewide campaign to organize farm workers for justice, job security, and needed benefits, farm corporations counteracted his movement by introducing the Teamsters Union as a choice for farm workers. Nevertheless, many workers believed in Chavez's leadership and waged strikes against farmers. Roberto had never seen such a unity among farm workers since he started farm work in 1962.

In 1975, when Roberto was working for a big farm company in California, Chavez asked him to organize workers. As he remembered, wages were very low and there were no health plans or fringe benefits even at such a big company, though what was offered was incomparably better than that offered by the farmer in Garden County. He received an organizer card from Chavez to initiate the campaign to form a union.

Divisive forces grew, however, during the initial stage of his campaign. Farm workers in California were forced to

choose membership in either the United Farmworkers, headed by Chavez, or the Teamsters Union, backed by the farmers. That created unusual unrest. Frequent confrontations between members of the two unions occurred and sometimes resulted in shooting and the loss of lives. Consequently Roberto's effort at his company was aborted. In time, farm workers in California were organized in one way or another. Roberto learned that, by 1979, most of the farm workers had signed labor contracts with farm companies through the United Farmworkers. Thereafter farm workers had to become union members to work at large companies.

Although workers in California received better wages and protection than ever before, their futures, according to Roberto, were still both uncertain and unpromising. Protection of workers was not yet sufficiently improved, and wages were still low. He spoke of his observation of farming in the Salinas Valley, where three corporate growers employed nearly 10,000 lettuce pickers and harvested many millions of cartons per year. These workers were about to encounter greater mechanization, which would threaten their jobs and significantly reduce the number of lettuce pickers. Roberto commented that growers were progressively reducing the cost of labor as the pressure for meeting workers' demands increased.

In 1978 Roberto quit his job at the company where he had tried to organize workers. His relations with the

employer and some workers had become awkward as a result of his union activities.

It was against this background and experience that Roberto assessed conditions at his camp in Garden County. Practically no workers at the camp, he found, were interested in the union movement, even though exploitation of the workers was far cruder and more serious than that in California more than ten years previously. He felt that his observation of the workers' attitude toward organized labor at that camp would apply to other workers in the state of which Garden County is a part. He recognized that various reasons shaped that kind of attitude. In Garden County mobility might be a serious factor. Unlike in California, workers were strictly seasonal laborers who stayed in one place or another for only two to three months. There was not enough stability to generate sustained collective efforts among the workers. Further, the workers lacked political consciousness of the need to win their rights through unified struggle.

Regarding the situation in California, Roberto observed that young Mexicans, particularly single men, preferred to work for farmers who did not sign contracts with the union. They disliked the constraints they would have to bear as union members, such as involvement in a strike, membership dues, and registration. Furthermore, they were more often than not illegal workers who needed farmers' protection.

They could not view Chavez as promoting their interest. Likewise, Filipinos were uninterested in unions. In Roberto's opinion, they were conservative, though sometimes opportunistic, and they traditionally acquiesced in the manner and conditions under which they worked. When Chavez called for strikes in the 1970's, it was they who often ignored his appeals. Roberto admitted, however, that many old Mexicans also defied his appeals.

Roberto participated in boycotts and strikes. When a strike lasted a long time, as one did in the mid 1970's, union members suffered severely, even though they got material assistance from the union in the form of food, clothes, and income. Nevertheless, such assistance was not sufficient for many workers. In his case, he felt fortunate during the strike, because his wife in Mexico had income adequate to feed his family. He saw both advantages and disadvantages in being a union member.

Personal Background

Roberto was born in 1939 in a small village of Copandra De Aliana, Michuacan, Mexico, the oldest of fifteen children. Poverty has marked his life for forty years.

His childhood passed not so much in schooling as in various kinds of labor for his family. When he was 6 years old, he started to pack and sell the onions his father grew. At the age of 8, he went to neighboring villages several miles away to sell milk. Roberto's early life, as he

remembers it, largely consisted of working with his father in vegetable fields and peddling. When his father left to peddle for several weeks at a time, a crisis often occurred at home, for there would be little to eat until he returned with bartered food or money. As this happened a few times every year, his mother had to be extremely ingenious to satisfy the children's needs. Somehow she managed to content them. At the worst times, she gathered spoiled, loose corn kernels and fried them with a bit of lard borrowed from her neighbor. They tasted delicious, and all the children liked them.

Roberto received only elementary education. He attended a one-room school accommodating about forty children between the ages of 7 and 12. The school was literally a shack, and it lacked even desks. He remembered that children had to sit on a plain dirt floor. Obviously there were not strict rules for attendance or other requirements. The school was open every day from 8:00 to 6:00, but Roberto could attend only two to three days a week and only for about three hours on those days. When he had to help his father in the morning, he received lessons only in the afternoon. Schooling was simply secondary to him, because he had to devote most of the day to working for his family. Roberto recalled vividly that he could not afford notebooks and pencils. Instead, he wrote on unfolded paper bags and wrapping paper. Instead of a pencil he used a

stick with a charred tip. As he got older, he used ink that he made out of cactus dust.

Among his surviving siblings, he had six sisters and five brothers. Three others had died when they were small. One of his younger sisters was bright and went to medical school though she received very little support from the family. She personally suffered a great deal because of poverty as she struggled to achieve her educational ambition. Roberto and his parents did not believe that she could succeed in getting a medical degree--a dream never thought about. Luckily she got it four years ago. Another sister also completed college to become a biologist and a third sister became a bilingual secretary. Meanwhile his brothers received little schooling and became farm laborers like Roberto.

Roberto told us that poverty did not destroy the moral aspects of socialization. His parents taught their children "to respect other people, to work hard, and to be responsible for our deeds." Without saying so in words, his parents, Roberto recalled, demonstrated the importance of family integrity and the obligation to help each other. His brothers were all diligent and worked for his father, and his sisters offered devoted help to their mother. Without concerted moral support, Roberto feared, his sister could not have received her medical degree.

Roberto married a 15-year old girl, Helena, when he was 17. He was not considered too young for marriage in his village, nor was she. In Mexico men and women married at even younger ages. Roberto's marriage to Helena was not welcomed by his parents, for they did not like her much. They thought she smiled too much and appeared to be weak. She was a pretty woman, however, and many young men were attracted to her. Although she had no schooling and was completely illiterate, Roberto knew she was intelligent.

After their marriage, their life continued to be difficult. Roberto did peddling and farm work as he had done with his father, but his income was invariably small. Meanwhile, he had two children. His big ambition was to cross the border to work in the United States and make a higher income. Fortunately he was able to seize such an opportunity in 1962, when the Kennedy administration was liberalizing immigration laws. He still remembers his delight at receiving a permanent visa to do farm work in California. With high hopes he took his entire family to Southern California. After working for farmers there for two years, however, he realized he had deluded himself. Initially he had thought that the United States was so rich that even farm workers could make enough money to build the security needed for a lifetime. Despite his and his wife's perseverance and hard work, they could hardly earn enough to live decently. The only difference between his life in his

village and Southern California, he found, was that he was working for big farmers in the United States, whereas he had worked for himself in Mexico. With deep disappointment and even a sense of defeat, his family returned to the Mexican village. Roberto felt his dignity was deeply hurt. The whole family was literally at a loss and lost confidence in its future.

After several discouraging years in Mexico, Roberto and Helena decided they needed a fresh start and moved to Michuacan near Mexicali. They had four children by then, and two others were born shortly after that. While Helena decided to run a little store to supplement the family income, Roberto continued his seasonal work in California to support his family, despite his earlier bitter experience. He knew that, having been born the son of a poor peasant and having received little schooling, he had no alternatives but to earn a living as a farm laborer. Indeed he had never learned other employable skills than picking and selling vegetables. Hence he accepted farm labor as his lot for life.

Helena's income became immensely helpful as the number of children grew to six, for his income had become unstable depending on the vagaries of seasons and various farmers. From time to time he could hardly send home even pennies, as was the case in the early summer of 1980, when he worked in Garden County. He appreciated that Helena never failed to

feed the children and sent them to school even during times of great hardship. Whenever Roberto went home, he was always impressed that her store was improved in one way or another. And on each occasion she begged him to stay with the family and work in Mexico. Roberto was sensitive enough to understand the hardship that she often confronted and her desire to have a normal conjugal life, yet he kept returning to the United States with the hope of making more of the money his family needed. Despite his absence, he had his family always on his mind, wherever he went. He often worried about whether or not his children were having decent meals when he ate his meals at his remote camp.

Even though Roberto and Helena were poor, they realized the importance of education for their children. In fact, one of the reasons they moved to Michuacan was that it had better schools, unlike the one-room school Roberto had attended, and even a state university. Roberto talked about his desire to send his first two sons, who were about to graduate from high school, to the university. He was confident that they would be admitted and would attend if he could provide them financial assistance. Though Helena had no schooling, she could also comprehend that university education would better her children socially. To Roberto this was even more evident, since he had learned that his sisters' education had enabled them not only to move out of poverty, but also to secure jobs in the professions.

When Roberto considered his children's future, he recalled that as a youth he himself had aspired to be a teacher. Even now, he deemed a teacher "the highest person and teaching, the highest kind of job." He was so impressed with his third grade teacher's "passionate" dedication to teaching peasant children, as Roberto recalled him, and the breadth of his knowledge about history and biology that he permanently identified his ambition with his teacher. Roberto could not predict what professions his boys might seek, but he was determined to give them as much financial support as he could.

In this connection, Roberto spoke of values he stressed in the socialization of his children. A good person, in his opinion, is a conscientious and intelligent worker. For him, an intelligent "man" is the one who "helps others using his reason" and "cares genuinely about others." Obviously Roberto thought of intelligence in terms of a social ethic. Reflecting on himself, he said, "[I] work hard, and I do a good job even if the land we are working on is not [mine]. No matter whose land it is, one has to work on it with all feeling." He emphasized that pride in one's work was derived from his dedication to it whether it was farm work or something else. In addition to that orientation toward other people and work, Roberto stressed to his children the importance of respecting others. As he recalled, these were also the values his father had taught him.

Francisco's Family

Migrant Work in Early Years

Forty-six years ago, Francisco was born to a poor peasant family in a Mexican village near the United States border. His parents were dark-skinned and of Spanish descent. His family was poor, but no worse off than other families in the vicinity, all of which were simply trying to survive. He was the eighth child in the family. There were three brothers and four sisters older than he and two younger sisters born a few years later. Two of the ten children died because of epidemic diseases and the lack of proper medical services. His was not an unusually big family by village standards: other families also had ten or eleven children.

Francisco's parents had a small piece of farmland that provided some food, thought not enough to live on. He remembered that his father used to leave for California during the spring and summer seasons almost every year, even before World War II, to earn a meager living for his family. Surprisingly he was never caught in his many illegal crossings of the border.

In 1946 Francisco and his entire family came to the United States because farm labor was in great demand in California and neighboring states. His father's friends

were instrumental in securing a visa for the family. Since then, Francisco has been a permanent U.S. resident, but he does not have a strong desire to become a citizen because Mexico is still his homeland to which he might yet consider returning. Francisco went to school through sixth grade in Mexico and received a little more schooling in the United States. Although he was only 12 years old when he came here, his parents could hardly afford to send him to school.

In the late 1940's and 1950's, Francisco's parents took him and the rest of his family wherever they went seeking farm work. During the slack season, they frequently lived in San Antonio, Texas, which eventually became their permanent residence. Farm crew leaders normally went to San Antonio to recruit migrant workers. Francisco's family joined other Mexican families working on farms in California, Arizona, Colorado, Oklahoma, and Alabama. As Francisco recalled, the crew leader transported dozens of these Mexican families and other laborers in a big truck as if they were soldiers going to the front. The trip usually lasted for a couple of days, and no one could rest properly, for the driver never stopped until he got tired. When he did stop to nap, they had to wait patiently for him to wake up to continue the trip. They had little freedom during the trip. Their physical mobility was strictly controlled by the authoritarian crew leader, who often frightened children with his shouting.

Arriving at last at the labor camp, Francisco and his family felt a moment of relief. Their relief faded quickly, Francisco recalled vividly, when they saw their "subhuman" accommodations. The camp consisted of two rows of shabby shacks, and Francisco's entire family was assigned to a couple of small, filthy rooms, just part of one of the shacks. They had to hang blankets to obtain a measure of privacy for the parents and other members of the family.

Around the middle of the 1950's, Francisco met a charming girl, Rosa, When they were working on the same farm in Oklahoma. She was 13 years old. Their families had worked for the same farmers for several years, and Rosa was helping her family in the fields. From the time they first met, Rosa and Francisco loved each other. They married in 1959.

Rosa also came from a big family; she was the sixth child and had six brothers and sisters. Born in this country, as all her siblings were, she had gone to school for five years in Texas. She considered herself a white Mexican, though she had a dark complexion. She participated in farm work when she was only 9 years old, as did her siblings before and after her. Though she grew up in the United States, she spoke English with a heavy Spanish accent because she did not often speak English.

Rosa's father had worked as a migrant laborer, mostly in orange fields in his later years, until he died of a heart attack. She felt that his farm work was too strenuous for him to live for long. He was survived by his wife, who is still living, and all his children. Her six brothers currently live in Texas, and all work for auto shops. Three of her sisters also live in Texas, while the other three live in California. Rosa is the only one of the thirteen children who still works on farms.

Returning to Francisco's family, his father gave up the migrant work he had done for many years and got a "city" job, as Francisco phrased it, that enabled him and his wife to live in Texas permanently. The hardships he had endured as a migrant laborer took their toll, and he died of a heart attack in 1973 at the age of 55. Francisco's brothers are now working for private industry in Texas. Though he judges physical proximity among relatives as very important, he cannot live in Texas, because he does not like to work in an industry that pays less wages than he earns as a migrant worker. Nor does Rosa prefer to live without relatives near her, but she accepts the reality of a life constrained by migrant work.

Since Francisco and Rosa married, they had worked on farms and went wherever labor was needed. They harvested various crops, including potatoes, pecans, cabbage, spinach, and lettuce in Idaho, Alabama, Colorado, Oklahoma, and

Arizona. Both of them tired of constantly moving around and Francisco decided to seek employment at Sears Roebuck in Texas; he succeeded in getting a job in its auto shop in 1968. After receiving training as a mechanic for three months, he moved into the shop. At that time, the auto repair business was generally shorthanded, and one could easily get a job in it, even with only meager schooling. Rosa continued to pick onions in Texas until 1972, when she also gave up farm work. She got a job at Williams and Dickies, the baby clothing firm.

After working as a mechanic for ten years, Francisco earned only slightly more than the income a young secretary received. His and his wife's combined incomes did not allow them to live decently. He became thoroughly discontented with his low wages and felt he was exploited because he did not have a high school education. He quit his job as a mechanic in 1978 to return to migrant work, having decided that the minimum wage had improved enough in the 1970's to justify his change, though it was still under $3.00 an hour. He also thought that the freedom available on the farm was preferable to the constraints at Sears Roebuck.

Wilson Farm

Francisco and Rosa went to Florida with their children. Fortunately he got a contract with a farm company to work in lettuce fields for six months, from late November through May. So did his son. Rosa and his son's wife also got jobs

hoeing the fields. In June 1979 Francisco took his family and several other families to New York State to pick lettuce. In November they returned to Florida when they again obtained a contract with their former company. In May 1980 Francisco, with a crew of several families, came to Garden County to work for the Wilson Farm, where we met them for the first time. This farm provided him with work for five months.

Let us introduce Francisco's crew to the reader. It included his family, his son's family, his daughter's family, a man and his daughter, and a single man. They all stayed in a small, two-story single house, provided rent-free by the farmer. It had four small bedrooms on the second floor and a living room and kitchen with dining area on the first floor. These quarters accommodated a total of fifteen men, women, and children. Though it appeared that their living space was excessively crowded, no one complained about it. In fact, Francisco felt that each family had enough privacy.

Francisco's son, Bendi, was instrumental in getting a contract with the Wilson Farm. He had worked for this farm the previous year and returned to the farm to find out if it needed laborers. Subsequently he phoned his father to inform him that there was enough work to be done at the farm for several months. When Francisco learned this, he was already in New York State looking for work, but decided to

move to Garden County to work for Wilson. No crew leader was involved in this contract in a formal sense, though Francisco headed the entire crew.

Unlike large farms in Florida that specialize in producing lettuce throughout the year, the Wilson Farm has a relatively small operation based on 750 acres; it requires various types of work during the contract, including grading and picking onions; harvesting tomatoes, green peppers, and asparagus; as well as setting and cutting lettuce. The men and women sometimes divided the labor; for example, when the men harvested lettuce, the women hoed the pepper fields and picked onions. Except for lettuce cutting and cucumber picking, which were done as piecework, other types of work were by and large "hourly work," which paid the worker $3.10 an hour, the prevailing minimum wage. As the weather grew hotter, they started earlier, regardless of the types of jobs assigned to them. During the midsummer when the temperature in fields rose above 100 degrees, they started work about 3:30 am., so as to accomplish as much work as possible in the cool morning hours. They returned to the house about 2:00 p.m. for lunch and rested for the remainder of the day.

In early July, Francisco allowed us to work with him picking cucumbers. We joined Francisco's crew in the field at 4:00 a.m. Most of us, to whom this type of work was completely foreign and very strenuous, could not continue

after 10:00 a.m. despite our initial determination to stay in the field as long as Francisco's crew did. We felt acute back pain resulting from bending the body continuously for hours. Even Rosa complained about backaches and told us that she could not stand it for the first two days. Two of us, however, remained in the field until noon. We felt so hungry and exhausted that we went to a nearby snack bar as soon as we washed our hands and muddy shoes. When we returned from the snack bar about 1:30 p.m., Francisco's crew was still in the field. We could not but appreciate their perseverance.

Francisco's Household

Francisco's nuclear family consisted of his wife, Rosa; Chico, a son, 10; and Anita, a daughter, 12. Chico had just finished fifth grade in Florida. His parents believed that the physical mobility required for migrant work posed no obstacle to his schooling, and they thought he did well at school in Florida. But Chico did not share their view. He did not like to move around every season and expressed his discontent that grew as a result of the adaptation he had to make to new schools and new environments. He was not happy that he had to quit school in Florida in late April to come up to the Wilson Farm and that he would have to miss school in the early part of the fall before they returned. He knew it was very difficult for him to adjust to a school situation when he was always behind his classmates. On top

of that he had no pencils, books, or paper when his family moved from one farm to another. All he had was a couple of pairs of sneakers and minimal clothing. When we learned this, we supplied him with stationery and books, but we are not sure he used them at all. Though summer school for migrant children was available in the county, and free transportation was also available, his parents did not encourage him to attend, nor was he interested in it. Chico, however, liked to help his parents in the fields whenever there was suitable work for him.

Anita, Francisco's younger daughter, had received schooling for four years. In the past several years, she had not attended school. Rosa told us that she was mentally retarded. When she repeated the first grade, teachers recommended that she be placed in a special education program. She complained that Anita exhibited little motivation to attend school and was uncertain whether the girl should continue special education.

Anita was 12 years old when we met her and a good-looking girl. She was physically mature and looked 14 or 15 at least. She was shy and reluctant to discuss her school problem with us, but always polite when we talked to her. We are not sure if her intellectual ability was seriously retarded. It is quite possible that her motivation to do academic work was seriously hampered. But she liked to work

along with her mother in the fields. She had people to talk to and did not have to compete with them.

The second family in the house included Maria, her husband, and their baby. Maria is Francisco's first daughter, aged 14; she married a Mexican boy who was 17 years old at the time of marriage. He had come from Mexico a couple of years previously, and joined Francisco's crew. In a few months he and Maria fell in love and decided to run away until her parents agreed to their marriage. They needed parental approval because she had just turned 13. She revealed that she loved him because he was a handsome, strong and warm young man. A few months after they ran away, Maria discovered she was pregnant. Realizing that nothing could be done to separate them, her parents told her and her boyfriend to return home without embarrassment. Maria was truly relieved and soon married him, in early 1973. When we visited them, Maria appeared to be quite content. Her baby was fondled as often by Rosa as by Maria.

Maria had completed sixth grade and has not returned to school for three years. She told us that she was often embarrassed because she looked much older and bigger than other students. Her classmates frequently teased her about her appearance. She intensely disliked school, partly for this reason and also because the principal and teachers were "mean" to her. In Anita's words, "The American teachers probably think that just because [we] are migrants [we]

don't want to be something, but it's not true. Everybody wants to be something in this world." Francisco and Rosa insisted that Maria had done school work fairly well. She supported their impression. Her husband urged her to go back to school to complete junior and senior high school.

Maria and her husband felt that they could not continue migrant work for long because it is too unstable to depend on and too physically exhausting. She hoped that he would get a job at an auto body shop in four or five years, as he had unusual versatility in painting cars. He, she told us, used to be a good painter in an auto shop in Mexico.

Maria and her husband had a combined monthly income of $300 at the Wilson Farm, whereas they had made $450 per month in Florida. In 1980 they could save no money at all, but in the previous year they had saved $2,000 and had bought a new car. All their income, we were told, they spent for groceries, laundry, food, clothing, and car payments, as well as for medical bills. And since they carried no medical insurance, when their baby was born, it was difficult to pay the hospital bill.

Bendi is Francisco's first child. He is 20 years old, tall, handsome, and muscular. His experience in the past several years reveals interesting facets of the life of a young migrant laborer. He, his wife, and their two small children made up a part of Francisco's household.

In 1977 Bendi visited his uncle in Florida to help him pick lettuce. That occasion created an opportunity to meet a pretty 15-year-old Mexican-American on a farm. He began to date her, and they were engaged two months later. Bendi was only 17 years old and dropped out of school that year. His fiancee stopped attending school during the fourth grade. When Bendi called his parents, who were still living in Texas, to get their approval of his engagement, they did not object to it and, instead, felt that it would be a positive step toward improving his behavior. In Texas, he had often been involved in fights resulting several times in detention in police custody. Every time such an incident occurred, Francisco had to seek his release, and that pattern was becoming a deep concern for both Francisco and Rosa. In the following year, Bendi married the girl.

In 1978 Bendi got a job at a large farm corporation with the help of his uncle, as a lettuce loader. He was included in a "trio" of lettuce workers. In a large lettuce field, one man cuts lettuce while another man packs it. As these men move along mile-long rows of lettuce, the loader carries the packed lettuce to a truck driver. Bendi was frightened of the job at the beginning, but he quickly learned the techniques needed to become a skillful loader. Late that year his father joined him to work in the lettuce fields, having quit his work at Sears.

In 1979 Bendi's wife had a baby in Florida. She was a pretty baby, with a light complexion, resembling her mother. She joined the 3-year-old girl his wife had adopted, prior to her marriage, from her sister who had been deserted by her husband. When Bendi and his wife married, this girl lived with them, but that did not pose any problem for Bendi because he liked the girl and accepted her without reservation.

Bendi did not think he married too early. Nor did he believe that his wife was too young at the time of their marriage, though she was only 16 years old. In his opinion, Mexicans mature physically and socially much faster than Americans. He insisted that a 15-year-old Mexican girl would be as knowledgeable about life as an 18-year-old American girl. Bendi recalled no serious conflict or misunderstanding between him and his wife in the two years since their marriage. She has been devoted to him and enjoyed attending to her children. He also pointed out that he has been a faithful husband.

This couple and their two children occupied one small bedroom together in the house at the Wilson Farm. Bendi acquiesced in the overcrowded accommodation, but he did not hesitate to compare it with the better housing provided in Florida. As far as work was concerned, it was incomparably easier at the Wilson Farm than in Florida. Also he earned

much less there than in Florida. In fact, he described his work at the Wilson Farm as a part of his "working vacation."

Let us turn to Bendi's work in Florida again. He worked for a big farm company for two seasons. In each season the company offered him a contract exclusively for lettuce work, which also provided "decent" living quarters for a reasonable rent. Thus the workers were permitted to stay on the farm for nearly six months, during which the lettuce was harvested. Bendi did loading work only because, as piecework, it was the most profitable way to earn an income on the farm. According to him, the average daily income for a lettuce worker in Florida was $120; occasionally it reached $200. Loaders got more. Bendi had earned as much as $1,000 a week the previous winter, but his six-month income amounted to only $13,000 because of many days off during the harvest season.

At any rate, loading was both strenuous and risky. When he worked day after day, carrying heavy boxes from the field to the waiting truck, he felt as if he were a prisoner totally constrained by external forces. Consequently, at the end of the day he was so tired and numb all over his body that he did nothing but sleep until the following morning. As fatigue accumulated every day, he simply had to be "stubborn" to continue his loading work. He always had constant pressure on him when he worked with the trio, for, to be efficient and make good money, coordination among the

pickers, packer, and loader was most important. The whole process would slow down if anyone of them was not working hard.

There are certain "tricks" or skills, necessary to handle lettuce boxes. Bendi had to learn such skills to work longer. He discovered that sheer physical power was not enough to carry lettuce boxes, for he could not sustain it for long. He warned that one could easily sprain muscles and injure the body unless he had learned the requisite skills. Further he insisted that one year working in the lettuce fields would shorten life by five years. He was told that loaders could work up to only 30 years of age. Hence, the loader usually received a larger share of income than the cutters and packers.

Many of the lettuce workers in Florida are Mexicans, and some are Filipinos. In Bendi's opinion, farm companies prefer to hire Mexicans and Filipinos since they are known for hard work and efficiency. But the Mexicans' problem, he commented, is that they often spend their money drinking and gambling on the weekends, though they work diligently on weekdays. In contrast, Filipinos not only work hard, but also save the money they earn. Like the latter, Bendi did not drink or gamble his money away.

Bendi also learned that many of the laborers in the lettuce fields were nameless and did not reveal their identities. They were men from all walks, including thieves

and ex-convicts. Therefore, no one dared ask about each other's personal background. An inquiry into such a matter was viewed as quite offensive to some men. Some of those people were involved in stabbing and killing. In fact, Bendi witnessed a couple of such incidents in the fields. When the temperature was very high in the fields, workers would easily lose their tempers at even the slight suggestion of an insult and throw sharp knives used for cutting lettuce at the men who incited their discomfort. Such an event would be caused by a suspicion that one might exhibit toward the other. Those men were quick and could throw knives very accurately. However, Bendi did point out that there were some decent men who were even willing to lend money. He was fortunate that he could team up with Maria's husband--his brother-in-law--and another congenial Mexican.

Thus far Bendi has saved $7,000, deposited in a Florida bank. He plans to continue loading work until he can save $20,000 which he will use to buy a home. He considers seasonal work only a stepping stone to more stable living and contemplates the possibility of working for an electric company in Texas, where his uncle works, within five years. He feels that his uncle would help get a job for him. He and his wife are aware that migrant work is too unstable and offers very little security for their later life. The seasonal farm worker, he commented, is totally subjected to

a situation over which he has no control. He cannot choose the kind of work he prefers, nor can he negotiate the wage he desires. Simply put, he must respond to the demands determined by market forces, the farmer, the amount of crops, and the weather. However, one of the major reasons Mexicans are engaged in seasonal farm work, in his view, is that they have no other employable skills because they have little schooling and cannot speak decent English. He insisted that he did not want to be one of them forever. Nevertheless, if one is a single man, he suggested that farm work is "a very good thing." A single man can earn enough money to support himself and can meet many girls and go to entertainment places.

These ideas began to evolve during the summer when we interviewed him. Meanwhile, he became aware that he would not be able to secure employment at the electric company without a high school diploma. Consequently Bendi grew interested in earning a high school graduate equivalency diploma (GED). At his request, we inquired into GED requirements and took him to a local adult education center where he would be able to take the tests that determine his academic level.

When Bendi stopped attending school in the eleventh grade, he could not think of any serious consequences. At that time he simply wanted to earn money and to get married. Incidentally his parents did not dissuade him from dropping

out of school either. As he recalled, he was a good student in science, social studies, and geography, but not in English and math. The more he thought about not only his future but also his family, the more urgently he believed he should get a job at the electric company even though it paid only $4.50 an hour at the outset.

Another family that lived with Francisco was Christobal, a middle-aged Mexican, and his 14-year-old daughter. Both had come to the United States as illegal immigrants from Mexico in 1970. He had left his wife and four other children in Mexico and brought his oldest daughter with him to Florida. They joined Francisco's crew when it moved north to the Wilson Farm. They could hardly speak English, but they were hard-working pickers. Though they did not talk much, even with their Mexican coworkers, they seemed to know exactly what they were expected to do in the fields. They did hourly work silently and diligently. Their silence veiled a sadness that we detected in their faces as they hoed the green pepper field.

Christobal planned to follow Francisco when he and his family returned to Florida in early November. For him, every day was a kind of trial. The need for money, security, and survival was critically defined for him and his young daughter. Christobal appeared to be deeply concerned with his legal status, as well as his daughter's, which he feared, might be discovered by immigration

officials. He also worried about his daughter's education, and his mind was often preoccupied with his family in Mexico.

We learned their personal background when Christobal inquired about further schooling for his daughter in Garden County. When we learned that she was an illegal immigrant, we referred her to a social worker who could offer better assistance than we could.

The last couple was Hector and his wife. Born in Mexico, he had emigrated to Southern California where he had attended San Fernando Valley State College for two years. After dropping out of college in 1978, he decided to do seasonal farm work, which he had done before with his family. When he went to Florida, he met Francisco, who agreed to bring Hector with him to the Wilson Farm. When we met him, he was already living with a teenage American girl. Though not married, they were accepted as a legitimate couple by Francisco and Rosa.

Hector's future was invariably uncertain, despite more schooling than anyone else in Francisco's household. He had intensely disliked academic work at San Fernando Valley, but he occasionally felt that he should complete college education just to get out of the migrant stream. On the other hand, he was quite unconfident about being admitted to a state college again. One of his problems was that he was not proficient enough in English to meet course

requirements, despite his six-year residence here. Actually he was afraid of returning to college.

Hector knew he could do farm work without much difficultly as long as he was in good health. For him, farm work was tolerable; he would continue it until he could find a more attractive job. Perhaps he was the most relaxed man among all the members of Francisco's crew. He was quick to find a local girl friend who agreed to live with him and who also did farm work with him. It would be most accurate to describe Hector as having made no further plans. He was 24 and his girl friend, 18. They appeared relatively content at least for the time being.

These five families made up Francisco's household. Although he was its head, he did not take any commission from the others. Each family signed a separate contract with the Wilson Farm, though their daily work was assigned by Francisco, who represented the entire household to the farmer. Francisco and Rosa considered this large household as a family. In their view, family is most crucial to people's life, and its integrity must be protected. They told us that their view reflected the Mexican tradition in which family is regarded as most important. They were especially content because their married son, daughter, and their children were living with them. They felt that they should extend support to the other families as well even though unrelated. Through many years of migrant experience,

they had learned that helping others and reciprocity were indispensable as they encountered new problems and new environments.

Two Black Families

The Jackson Family

The reader will recall that Francisco and his crew worked on a 750-acre farm, a comparatively large one in Garden County. Next to it is John Romo's farm established by his father in 1922 on 90 acres. Over the years, John, his son, and his son-in-law have acquired additional land, amassing 350 acres in all. Nearly retired now because of ill health, John has transferred the land to his son and son-in-law, but he continues to provide farm equipment, and he receives a share of the income.

In the spring of 1979 John Romo hired twenty workers to harvest lettuce and cabbage, and during the summer an additional fifty people, recruited locally, to pick tomatoes and peppers. The first twenty workers, consisting of Filipinos and Mexicans, would return in the fall to pick lettuce a second time. In addition, John hired four black men permanently, to operate machines throughout the farming season from March through November. Al Jackson was one of them. Al, his wife, Joan, and their eight children lived together in camp barracks provided by Romo, which was located at the end of a large lettuce field.

In 1957, when Al was 12 years old, his parents brought him to this farm along with eight other siblings. They were seasonal farm laborers who worked in Florida in the fall and winter, and in Garden County in the spring and summer. They had been poor sharecroppers in Georgia where they could not earn enough income to survive, even at a minimum level of subsistence, as they had more children. They grew potatoes and bred some pigs, but those did not provide enough income for the entire family. Finally, they decided to move to Florida to seek more gainful work.

Al remembered that his parents came up to Garden County every year, so that they could have an income throughout the year. Their standard of living did not visibly improve in Florida, but their hardship was somewhat ameliorated because they earned more income from seasonal work. His parents used to move up to the Romo Farm with four other families every spring. They worked as a group under the supervision of the crew head, who was one of those family heads. He was their relative and not a crew leader in the sense that the term is widely used today. He was a paternalistic head whom John Romo visited in Florida every winter to discuss needed labor and other arrangements for the spring. The farmer never offered them a contract, but he advanced several hundred dollars each year so that the crew head could drive the four families to the farm. Whether they received a

contract or not, did not matter to those black people, as the notion of contract was totally foreign to them.

Since 1957 Al had returned to the farm every year. After a couple of years, he dropped out of school completely, though he was still in the ninth grade. When he stopped attending school, his parents did not regard it as unusual or distressful. Nor did Al feel guilty about it. After all, none of his siblings had completed high school. He felt relieved and better able to concentrate on farm work. He liked soil, clean air, and open fields and did not mind hot weather at all.

It was in the late 1950's that his wife's family also moved to Florida from Georgia. Her parents were also sharecroppers in Georgia who had found it necessary to seek work in Florida to earn a more decent living. Joan was one of five children. By 1959 her parents and Al's parents were well acquainted, and Al's family brought Joan with them to the Romo Farm, while her family stayed in Florida. As they came up together from Florida each year, Al and Joan had opportunities to know each other well and began to fall in love. In 1962, when Joan was 16, she began to have academic difficulty, lost interest in school, and decided to drop out. Though her parents were disappointed when she dropped out, she felt she could no longer attend school. She told us, however, that she was a good student with some A grades through the eighth grade. Then she began to fall behind.

Al and Joan agreed to live together in order to stay on the Romo Farm throughout the year. He was 17 and she was 16 then. Within a year they had their first baby and a second the following year. Those events led to their marriage in 1964, when she was expecting yet another baby. Romo subsequently offered them rent-free living quarters, a part of the labor camp barracks, in which they have lived for fourteen years, up to the present.

In those fourteen years, six additional children were born at the labor camp. Unfortunately, the first child died of pneumonia when he was 4. Al's family, including eight children ranging from 2 to 15, occupies the end unit of the barracks, which contains four such units. It is located a half-mile away from the shipping area of the Romo Farm. The road connecting the two places is a part of the lettuce field and becomes very soft and muddy when it rains. But that matters little, for Joan and her children rarely wear shoes or sneakers, except when it is cold. Most children are barefooted, except when they go to school, and wear only pants. The tiny area in front of their barracks is a playground for the children--the only part their father left untouched when he turned over topsoil with a tractor during the spring. This playground is also used to hang laundry. Another small area on the right side of their home is a vegetable garden that Joan cultivates every year to grow

spinach, eggplants, carrots, radishes, and one or two other vegetables that they cannot get from the fields.

Living quarters for the ten of them consist of a combined kitchen and living room and two small bedrooms. The former room is about fifteen feet long and seven feet wide. A small dining room table is on the left, a refrigerator is on the right, a small black-and-white TV set is on the front side near the entrance, and a sofa sits opposite the entrance. Because the area is too small for the family, Joan has to serve meals at two different times. Behind the kitchen-living room is the larger bedroom, also fifteen by seven feet, where Al, Joan, and the two smallest boys, aged 2 and 3 sleep together. Next to it is a smaller bedroom for the other six children, four boys and two girls. The oldest son, John, aged 15 keeps order there, to minimize friction and sibling fights.

John Romo employs Joan every year as an hourly worker, like her husband. They were paid $3.10 in 1980, the minimum wage that the farmer was required to pay workers. Joan was busiest in March, April, and May, during which she, along with other workers, planted and hoed lettuce and onion fields and in August and September, when they picked tomatoes and hoed the lettuce fields.

In June and July, when lettuce, onions, and string beans were harvested, she did not have work every day, because the

harvesting of those vegetables was usually done by Filipinos, Mexicans, and machines.

During the busy months, Joan worked for ten hours every day except Sundays and rainy days. She and Al took one day off a week to rest, if they had good weather. If bad weather prevented them from working on weekdays, they worked on Sundays as well. When Joan went to a field, she left the 2-year-old son, the smallest child, with older ones in the barracks. Though he needed his mother's frequent attention, she could not afford to stay home. She was not much concerned about leaving him, however, for she had brought up her other children in almost the same manner. In the meantime, during slack months in the summer, Joan stayed home with her children, but once in a while, she worked for other farmers feeding chickens and picking blueberries.

Al worked for eight months a year, during which he operated machines. He drove a tractor and a string bean picker along with the farmer's son and son-in-law. Every day his work assignments came directly from them. He felt quite comfortable operating a big machine without many external constraints, and he was given a good deal of comparative freedom in the fields. He worked for 60 hours a week.

Al made about $5,700 a year, while Joan earned nearly $2,800. Their combined income totaled only $8,500 during the farm season. During the off-season, from November to

March, they collected unemployment checks, as did John Romo, his sons, and their spouses. Joan was acutely aware that the total income she and her husband earned was small for her large family. Yet she did not complain about it. Rather she felt that she and Al had a relatively happy life and that her children were more or less content. They all felt secure and stable knowing the farmer would not fail to give them jobs. Frugality, she stressed, was the key to managing her household. She was proud that she never asked for welfare even at times of severe hardship. She insisted that the material quality of life was a matter of one's own definition. Hence, when she heard that other people had larger incomes than she did, this did not bother her. She was not interested in comparing the social status of her family with others'.

Joan and Al stayed home during the winter season and were not interested in going to towns and cities except when they had to buy food and clothing. She admitted that she was content if her children were around. Al did not have any greater ambition than his wife. Only occasionally did he go to bars with other "guys." Otherwise he shared most of his time with her and the children. Joan spoke of honesty and simplicity as important attributes of her family's life. During the winter she read the Bible once in a while, the only book available at home, though she never went to church.

In the past fifteen years, during which Al and Joan had worked for the Romo Farm as a team, they had never received a contract from the farmer, nor had it occurred to them that their wages should be negotiated with the farmer. They accepted whatever was offered them and thought that the Romos were trustworthy and kind because they gave them work and paid them without delay. When their wage was raised from $2.90 to $3.10 an hour in 1980, they were grateful to the farmer, though the raise was required by law.

In short, Al and his wife took John Romo's paternalism for granted and expected the same relationship to continue in the future. After all, this kind of relationship with the farmer began when Al's grandmother worked for the farm in the 1940's. In Al's opinion, there was no reason to change it. Joan supported Al's view. It was implicit in what she said: She did not want to think about the following day and the following year, because she had work and could feed her children. Her acquiescent attitude, she continued, had been cultivated in her early years of life in Georgia.

The Jacksons did not have health plans or other benefits except their participation in the social security program. It was fortunate, Joan felt, that her children escaped serious illnesses, except her first son who died, as mentioned earlier. She and Al had never seen doctors in the past several years. It was her instinctive impression that

clean air, a great deal of sunshine, and unconstrained living in their environment contributed to their good health.

But Joan did point out that farm work was very strenuous for both her and her husband. After ten hours of work in the fields, they were exhausted in the evening. On top of that, Joan had to attend to the children in the evening and to prepare supper for all the hungry children and Al. She knew that hard work, as well as bearing and rearing many children, made her look much older than she actually is. In fact, though she was only 33 when we met her, she appeared to be over 40 at least.

Joan did not speak much to people, including her own children. Her conversation with them was often characterized by her brief verbal responses, even though these responses did not represent a lack of interest in conversation. She smiled occasionally, but her face tended to be grim. Mostly, she spoke to her children when they needed her attention. Likewise, her husband was not verbal. Yet when there were ten people in the family, there was constant talking and sometimes yelling among them in one way or another.

Joan gave more attention to her children than her husband did, with respect to schooling and disciplining in general. Six of her eight children were attending school. John, her oldest son, was in the tenth grade. Joan told us

that he was a good student, with some A's up to the eighth grade as she had been when she was a student, but that his academic work had deteriorated so badly in the past two years that he got D's and F's on his report cards. When he advanced from a junior high school to a senior high, he lost interest in academic work and, instead, devoted most of his time to the farm work that Romo gave him from time to time and dating girls. Joan was concerned about whether or not he would be able to finish high school.

Her second son, Jack, in the ninth grade, was often spoken of as bright and diligent. He appeared to be an all-around boy with all A's on his report card except in health. He received a special award for a social studies project in 1979. In addition, he showed us trophies and prizes that he won for his academic work and basketball. Joan's pride in him was quite obvious when she told him to show us his latest report card. She thought he would be able to go to college though she and Jack knew very little about college. Their paucity of knowledge was understandable considering that no one in her family or Al's had ever received even a high school diploma. Jack was a quiet boy who spoke only a little when we approached him, probably because of his shyness. Still, he was the most articulate child in the family.

Joan regarded her other children as average. She claimed that she regularly went to parent-teacher

conferences. She felt she was a respectable mother because of Jack, who was known as an excellent student by his teachers, even though she was a farm worker and a high school dropout herself. She just hoped that her other children would follow him as a model.

The Romos knew John and Jack and spoke of them highly. They gave the boys part-time jobs, particularly during the summer. With the money they earned, John and Jack bought sneakers, baseball gloves, and candies. John, however, spent most of his money for dates.

Joan viewed her children as very helpful. Those boys and two other children--a 10-year-old boy and a 9-year-old girl--often assisted her. It was their chore to wash dishes, to clean the house, and sometimes to cook meals when she came home late in the evening.

Al and Joan made the important decisions about their children together, but, generally, she had more influence than he did over them. Al intervened only when she had a problem with the older boys. To punish children she usually spanked them. Occasionally she refused to serve meals, but just recently she had felt deeply hurt when her children went to bed without supper. Though she had promised to cook fried chicken, which they liked, she refused to prepare the dish after they disobeyed her. This bothered her all night, and she felt so sorry for the children that she arose early

the next morning to fry chicken for breakfast. Their enjoyment pleased her enormously.

The Washington Family

When we talked to him, Gary Washington was 29. He was a slim, handsome black man, a little shorter than six feet and weighing about 140 pounds. He had married Ann, an attractive black woman, five years previously when she was 15 years old. At the time of marriage, she already had two babies, 2 and 1 years of age, whose father was her school teacher in the sixth grade. Since their marriage, two more children had been born, and Ann was expecting another baby soon.

Since 1978 Gary had worked at what he called a chicken house--a poultry company managed by whites, including Hispanics. His job was to debone chickens. Every morning he woke up at 6:00 and left for the chicken house at 6:30 to start his work at 7:00. He wore a heavy rubber apron, a pair of metal gloves, and a cap. He stood by the conveyor system that carried slightly frozen chickens to him and other workers standing on the same line. As each chicken came to his position, he deboned it with a heavy and sharp knife. In this process the metal gloves were an extremely useful safety device. Without them, he might have cut his fingers or hands with the knife or sharp bones.

The entire factory was air conditioned to a temperature that kept chickens fresh. This was too cold for the workers, and required them to wear winter clothes. For the first couple of hours, deboning did not bore Gary, but as time went on, the work became very monotonous. Particularly in the afternoon this dulling work sometimes threw a scare into him when he accidentally wielded the knife at a wrong angle. Toward the end of the day, his hands got cold and almost numb. He could easily hurt himself when he got tired.

In this chicken house the workers were "rough" and often involved in arguments, which fostered constant hostility among them. Furthermore, racial prejudice was evident at both the rank-and-file and the managerial levels. The Hispanic manager and foreman were especially hostile toward blacks and often "picked on" blacks whenever there was a problem on the conveyor system. They assumed that the black workers were slow and lazy. Even when workers stood at the conveyor system, blacks and whites, many of whom were also Hispanics, were segregated. Gary did not view racial segregation as especially unusual, being used to it, but he was grudgingly forced to acknowledge the foreman's hostility toward him. As many blacks noted, racial discrimination and boredom were major characteristics of the chicken house.

For deboning, he was paid only $3.10 an hour. He earned between $25 and $31 daily, depending on extra work he

did after 4:00 p.m. Typically he started work at 7:00 and had a fifteen minute break at 10:00. There was a thirty-minute lunch recess at noon, followed by work until 2:45 p.m., when workers had another fifteen-minute break. Those who opted for eight-hour work stopped at 4:00. But Gary frequently continued deboning until 5:00 or 6:00, so as to receive additional income.

Gary got his job at the chicken house in December 1978, when the farm season was over. Previously he had worked at one of the largest vegetable packing factories in Garden County. At the peak of the harvest season, this factory hired 200 to 300 additional workers. Gary got a job at the factory as a machine operator in May 1978. He worked for eight hours every day and received $4.50 an hour. The division of labor was clearly defined at the factory. He was assigned to operate a machine that sorted string beans from other materials, including such unusual ones as snakes, rabbits, and frogs carried to the processing department by the trucks from the fields. In turn, his work was followed by the second division of labor, which washed the sorted string beans. They were subsequently either frozen for packing or boiled for canning.

Gary considered his wages relatively good and his job easy. He believed he got the job because the manager of the company recognized his mechanical skills. He had developed sensitivity to machines and the ability to handle them when

he had worked earlier at General Motors in Delaware. The manager may also have noticed that Gary liked industrial arts. Whether or not his employment was determined by such qualifications, Gary was glad to get the job. At this factory he got along well with other workers represented by multiethnic groups, including Puerto Ricans, Blacks, Italians, Japanese, and Latvians. He felt that management treated every worker equally regardless of his or her ethnic or racial background as long as he or she worked well, and that its orientation influenced social relations among the workers. Though he liked the job, he was not allowed to keep it long, for he was laid off in November when the farm season was over. Incidentally, Gary was asked to return to this factory when we were interviewing him, and he was about to leave the chicken house.

Gary was classified as a seasonal farm worker because his work involved processing farm produce. Thus, his children were qualified to receive benefits offered to migrant families, including summer school and day care. He was first exposed to farm work in the summer of 1977, when he and his wife picked blueberries and cucumbers. During that summer he was still receiving unemployment checks while his wife and her children were on welfare. So it was that they could save all income from farm work to buy a used car. Gary had been laid off from the General Motors plant in Delaware in late winter, 1977, where he had worked on the

assembly line for four years since 1972. Though his job was nearly as monotonous as deboning chickens, he liked it better, partly because he received much higher wages. He wanted to get this job again in the future, though he was not sure when GM would rehire the laid-off people. Prior to his work at the plant, he had served in the United States Marine Corps for a couple of years.

At the time we were interviewing him in 1980, Gary was groping to decide in his own way the courses of action he should take to determine his future. On the one hand, he felt powerless and overwhelmed by the external forces influencing him. When he sought assistance to get a VA scholarship to go to college, he was completely ignored. When he applied for relief from the HUD, his application was mislaid. When he saw an advertisement seeking applicants for a job as a bank teller, he applied for it, but was rejected in favor of a white person. All he could do, after he had been laid off at the GM plant, was to end up in the chicken house where he was treated as a dumb and lazy black. On the other hand, he had not entirely lost his motivation to go to college for training in industrial arts, an area of special interest to him, if he could get a full scholarship to support himself. He had also considered returning to the Marine Corps, but had never seriously explored it. As mentioned earlier, he also hoped to return to the automobile assembly line.

Gary was aware that he had served the Marine Corps as well as anyone else and had worked at the automobile plant with no less competence than his co-workers. Yet he had lost confidence in his ability to seek alternatives. So he took a wait-and-see attitude toward his immediate future. In fact, he was pleased with an opportunity to return to the vegetable packing factory, even though he was asked to work there for only four months.

Gary and his family were living in a three-bedroom apartment in a completely black housing complex that had been built for 200 low-income families. There were even breakfast facilities in the complex for children on welfare. According to Gary most, if not all, families in the complex were on welfare and received HUD assistance to cover their rents. Likewise his wife and four children received a welfare check every month totaling $414 and food stamps equivalent to $170 per month. Gary did not opt for welfare unless absolutely necessary, for he preferred to earn sufficient income from his work. Fifty-six dollars would have been added to the monthly welfare check if he had been living on it. Since his applications for HUD assistance had been mislaid twice, he had to pay a full rent of $212 a month. Gary complained that it took more than a year in Garden County for HUD applications to be approved. Hence, he wanted to move to a city thirty miles away, where his family could receive public assistance more readily. He

felt that he could go to college with an income only from his part-time work, if his family received HUD assistance in addition to welfare checks.

The Washingtons lived in their apartment for two years. Simultaneously, they liked the apartment and were wary of its environment. Gary told us that there was so much violence and roughness among children there that Ann kept her daughters inside as much as she could to avoid danger and the influence of rough children. In Ann's view, children's violence was nothing more than a reflection of their parents' violent behavior and their lack of attention to their children. So her children stayed home more often than not and sat before a black-and-white TV set all day.

Let us turn to Ann briefly. She was a 20-year-old woman with four children. She was a good and attractive student in a city school that enrolled predominantly black students. When she was in the sixth grade, however, her social studies teacher fell in love with her, which resulted in her unexpected pregnancy. When this was discovered, her mother was deeply upset and wanted to approach the principal of the school, but ultimately she decided not to expose the episode because of the shame she herself felt. Meanwhile, Ann managed to complete elementary school and had her first baby when she was 12 years old. Her relationship with the man was not completely terminated, however, for she became pregnant again. Subsequently, at the age of 14, she dropped

out of school and attended to her two babies with the assistance of her mother.

Ann regretted that she had allowed her teacher to have sexual relations with her. She admitted, however, that she could not control her involvement in the relationship. The result was disastrous for her, for she became a school dropout in the seventh grade and had to take care of her children without his help at all. Within a year or so, she met Gary and decided to marry him.

Ann expressed her hope of getting more education, but did not know whether or not it would be possible to finish junior high school at her age. For the time being her priority was to attend to the fifth baby to be born and her other children.

Ann's first daughter had just finished first grade, and her second daughter attended kindergarten. She was pleased that both of them did well at school and were reported to be ahead of a majority of their classmates. But Ann was upset on one occasion when she was told that her first daughter cursed at some friends at school. This was particularly disappointing to her because nobody used such expressions at home. She became quite concerned with the environment in which her children were growing up. She claimed that she and her husband rarely spanked their children or frightened them by excessively yelling and cursing at them. Indeed, we sensed that they exhibited a great deal of concern for their

children. Their five children appeared free, relaxed, and self-confident. Ann's interest in her children was also revealed by her volunteer work as a teacher's aide twice in the past year, when her first daughter had gone on picnics. She had also offered her help making cupcakes at a children's birthday party at school.

That her family received public assistance, Ann insisted, should not influence her children's respectability and attitudes toward other people. She always dressed her children well and emphasized that they had to look and behave respectably when they went to restaurants where white children were present. More often than not, she said, white children were afraid of blacks because of their appearance and behavior. She also made special efforts not to make her children feel deprived or inferior to other children on special occasions, such as Christmas. Saving money for such occasions meant real sacrifice.

Finally, turning to their view of racism, Gary and Ann believed America to be a racist society. Both encountered various degrees of discrimination and prejudice. Police were particularly discriminatory against blacks in Garden County until the early 1970's. Blacks' access to employment and housing, Gary recalled, was as severely limited as it had been in Mississippi. Both admitted, however, that they did not experience pervasively explicit discrimination and prejudice in the late 1970's, although Gary continued to

encounter prejudice against him in his work and some other areas of his experience. To Gary, racial prejudice tends to be more implicit than explicit.

Likewise, Ann persistently experienced covert prejudice against her and her children. For example, when she took one of her daughters to the doctor's office for a checkup, a white child complained to her mother that a black girl was getting too close to her. Immediately her mother removed her to a distant seat without saying anything. Ann believed that whites' prejudice against blacks was in part a reflection of their fear of blacks and lack of trust in them. This was quite obvious when Ann invited her daughter's white friend to a birthday party held at their apartment. That girl's mother felt that she could not drive into the black apartment complex to deliver her daughter. Hence, Gary went out to bring her to the party.

Both Gary and Ann held the view that white people are not representatives of the racist society. They are individuals. They held the notion that a combination of blacks' low social class and racial discrimination against them in various forms impeded blacks' social mobility. The same applied to Gary, he thought.

Chapter II

Situation Centeredness

Seasonal and migrant farm workers are marginal people who stand on the fringe of American society; they eke out a meager living from an industry which could hardly function without them. Yet, despite their essentialness to agriculture, they are forgotten by the majority of Americans and their struggle for survival remains for the most part unrecognized by those who benefit from the fruit of their labor. It is indeed ironical that, in a country such as the United States, where food production has reached a zenith of efficiency unmatched by any other nation in the world, those men, women, and children who harvest the crops should be so persistently haunted by hunger and privations. Incredible though it may seem, the appalling conditions of their itinerant existence have not changed appreciably in the last twenty years since the day they were revealed by Edward R. Morrow in his shocking expose of the migrant way of life--Harvest of Shame

Most seasonal and migrant farm workers in New Jersey, as elsewhere, epitomize the ranks of unskilled, underemployed labor. Their biographies regularly reveal that they turn to farm work out of necessity, their lack of training and marketable skills having barred them from more attractive occupations. Moreover, they often share such

common attributes as chronic poverty and periodic unemployment which plague their lives persistently, literally until the day they die.

Migrant and seasonal farm work is a function of the surplus labor that exists in the national and international economies, such labor being more often than not subjected to exploitation and manipulations. In this particular occupational area, there is little security for the workers. Employment is always contingent upon the crops, the seasons, the weather, the labor market, the availability of transportation and accommodations, and the national economy. Moreover, in New Jersey and most other states, men who work in the fields do not have the support and protection of a union such as that initiated by Cesar Chavez in California some years ago. Accordingly, they lead lives which can only be characterized as "situation-centered" since they are constantly buffeted by unforeseeable conditions over which they have no control.

Dependency on situation-centered conditions often involves not only uncertainty of employment, but also transiency, the absence of social and personal anchorages, and the predominance of present-time orientation. These characteristics constitute a symbiotic association that dominates the existence of farm laborers wherever they are. Because of their subjugation to external factors, migrant workers are denied both stability in their present lives and

hope for it in the future. Men and women alike (often families with many children) "follow the sun," covering endless miles in dilapidated vehicles, searching for work according to the cycle of seasons. Whenever they find it, they settle in the location for as long as it lasts, only to move on a few weeks later to the promising area. One of the consequences of such itinerancy is the migrants' preoccupation with the present. Finding only temporary employment along their way, they cannot without great difficulty connect its unstable essence with the ultimate attainment of remote goals. Accordingly, they demonstrate little ambition and make little sustained effort to define and achieve distant objectives. These traits which are associated with situation-oriented living are intensified by two other factors--the absence of personal anchorage, and dependency on public assistance, both of which are characteristic of people who live on the fringe of the mainstream community.

From an overall standpoint, it may be said that marginality in society defines the farm laborers' participation in economic, political, and cultural institutions. It prescribes life circumstances for them which are restrictive as well as inevitable and inescapable. The migrant workers' limited access to employment and resources is a primary condition for the situation-centered work they seek; it also prohibits them from establishing

permanent social anchorages in a stratified society which permits few opportunities to them outside of temporary employment in agriculture. In reality, however, this type of existence is not a free choice on the part of those who lead it: it is an entrapment which victimizes the helpless and the hopeless. Nor is it an enduring condition which maintains its existence by itself; instead, it is one created and perpetuated by an economic system that generates cheap, surplus labor and unemployment. To an outside observer, situation-centered life may seem addictive, for very few itinerant workers do succeed in breaking away permanently from the migrant stream, even with the assistance of skills retraining program.

To a significant extent, most of the farm workers we interviewed did share these situation-centered attributes, but they also exhibited individual variations in their manifestations. The profiles presented in the previous chapter highlights the dual aspects of migrant workers' characteristics--a common core of situation-centeredness, and diversified approaches to the solving of life problems. In this chapter, we will explore these salient common characteristics of situation-centeredness, drawing upon the experiences of migrant and seasonal workers to illustrate them.

Subordination to Situational Conditions

By subordination to situational conditions, we mean that the externals of one's life and work thoroughly control every thought and action. The farm workers we studied have experienced this kind of subordination extensively.

Mary was our youngest black informant. Only 16 years old and married for one year, she had come to Garden County with her family from Florida every summer for the past seven years. At the age of 15 she had a baby and had quit school to attend to her. Mary and her husband, aged 21, were members of a crew organized by John Foster, consisting of twenty-four black people and ten Haitians. These blacks were mostly men and related to each other. John had been working for seven years for David Muzzilli, a farmer who owns 650 acres in Garden County. David got in touch with John, the crew leader, in February and asked him to bring up thirty men for July and August to harvest onions. The whole crew, thirty-four workers, and their families drove up to David's camp at the end of June 1980.

Mary, her husband, and their baby lived in a small room, approximately ten by twelve feet, in one of the concrete barracks that housed the migrant workers. The room contained a double bed, which took up most of the space, and two chairs; a tiny area was set apart for cooking. Running water and toilet facilities were available only at another barracks building some forty yards away. They had no

complaint about their living quarters, however; they had lived in shacks for years.

Mary accompanied her husband to supplement his income. Her mother, who came to the camp with them, agreed to take care of Mary's 2-month-old baby, for she had a heart problem that forced her to stay in the camp. Although Mary had hoped to work for two solid months, on her second day of work she severely injured her back when lifting a heavy basket of onions. Thereafter she could hardly bend over to pick onions, and she missed three weeks of work.

Her brother, who was also with the crew, took her to the clinic for migrant farm workers at a nearby hospital. Though she got a prescription to relieve her pain, she was not examined thoroughly because the clinic doctor was on vacation. On the following day, we volunteered to take her back to the clinic. Again the doctor was not available, and the nurse told her to continue to take the pills to alleviate her discomfort. She did not take the medicine, however, for she could not afford to buy it. She was aware that she and her husband did not have even pennies at that time, and that he would not receive his first pay from John for three more days. She also knew that they had borrowed money for food from the crew leader, who often lent money to crew members and their families. Because he was the only man in the camp with a credit card that enabled him to get

cash from a local bank when an emergency occurred, everyone depended on him.

We immediately bought the medicine for Mary, who needed it desperately, and we learned from her later that her husband could not have paid for it even after his first payday, for he received only $24 for the entire week. Mary had hoped that he would earn at least $100. After the second week, he earned only a few dollars more. These workers learned only belatedly that the yield of onions was very poor because of excessive rain late in the spring. The whole crew did piecework and spent occasional days idle when there were not enough onions to pick. Because the farmer had not told him of the poor onion crop, John Foster assumed he had to bring a crew of thirty-four, as requested. Hence, every man John recruited had come to the farm anticipating regular work. When they all discovered that the crop was poor, they had no choice but to stay on. Moving to another farm was out of the question, as was returning south, for there would be no other work for them before late September in Florida.

Meanwhile, Mary's husband made about $50 in each of the third and fourth weeks. He and Mary were quite disappointed, but could not overtly complain to John about the low income because John was not only the crew leader, but also the "boss" of the entire kinship network consisting of sixty-two men, women, and children in the camp. Mary was

related to John through her brother, who was married to John's daughter. According to Mary, John had received an advance of $2,500 from the farmer the previous winter and felt obligated to stay, even though the crop was very poor. He had used that money to pay for a car that he bought for his son, instead of covering the travel expenses incurred by the crew. Most people at the camp were at his mercy because they owed him various amounts. Mary had to borrow $80, while her parents, she was told, incurred a debt of $200.

Originally, based on the previous year's experience, every crew member was expecting at least $150 every week. Though Mary felt cheated by John and the farmer, as the other men and women did, she thought she had to be acquiescent. After all, she was a high school dropout and still a minor, and her husband would continue to depend on John to get work in Florida and elsewhere.

At any rate, Mary and her husband had no intention of leaving the camp. Even that small income would help to pay for the car he had bought the previous summer in Florida.

Mary revealed to us her aspiration for getting a more stable "inside" job, such as food packing, in Florida. But she later learned that she was not qualified for it without a high school diploma. As she became aware of the restrictions by her lack of education she felt the need to return to school to complete her diploma requirements.

Incidentally, Mary's husband was a carrier in Florida, responsible for loading lettuce and cabbage into trucks, where he managed to earn up to $200 a week doing piecework. He and Mary lived in one of the labor camps owned by his farmer. They had been separated for nearly a year since she had become pregnant, but he had returned to live with her two months prior to moving up to David Muzzilli's camp in Garden County. Mary's cherished hope, she confessed, was that they would be able to "stand together" whatever might happen to them thereafter.

Turning to a seasonal farm worker, Louise, let us look at how she was subjected to situational conditions.

Louise was a 40-year-old black woman who had nine children; two of these had died when they were young, and she had also had a miscarriage. She had six children by her first husband, who died of pneumonia in 1972, and three by her second husband, who died of a stroke in 1975. When her mother moved to Garden County from Norfolk, Virginia, in 1967 to do seasonal work, Louise followed her with her family, including her husband, a truck driver at that time. Her mother, a farm laborer and a domestic throughout her life, had supported her entire family of twelve children and her husband, who had been an alcoholic for years. In 1970, Louise lived in an apartment with four of her children, her mother, and a sister who had a 6-month-old baby.

Louise had started to work as a farm laborer at the age of 15, when she quit high school. Shortly after, she was married to her first husband. Though she needed the income she earned from seasonal farm work, her pregnancies, which occurred nearly every year, often prevented her from working. Since 1967, she had worked at a vegetable packing factory and at various farms in Garden County. Strictly speaking, she was a seasonal worker as many blacks were in the county. Though she received social security checks to support her family after her husband had died, she needed a supplementary income. As a recipient of social security benefits, according to her, she was not qualified for welfare. Therefore, her seasonal work became a very important source of income.

In recent years, Louise had engaged in seasonal work, rather than vegetable packing. For many seasonal workers like her, finding jobs at local farms was haphazard. During the season, she had to rely on word of mouth from an informal network of neighbors and acquaintances. Because there were no recruiters who sought local labor on behalf of farmers, men and women interested in seasonal work had to visit the farmers to find out what kind of work was available each time they heard about the jobs. For many of them, however, visiting the farmers was often very difficult, for they did not have private transportation. Louise made it her practice to talk to the farmer first

before she started to work. She took for granted the haphazardness and inconvenience involved in her search for work; she had never known any other way. For her, she admitted, haphazardness had been a part of her life since childhood. In other words, she was used to irregular and unplanned situations.

Daily transportation to the fields was frequently a serious problem for Louise, as for other seasonal workers, unless the farmer provided a bus. When a bus was provided, she would learn its route and wait for it. It was usually driven by a man who also served as the farmer's "daily recruiter." His bus came daily when workers were needed, but unlike public transportation, operated according to schedule, the "recruiter's" bus was rather unreliable. To catch it, Louise had to wait for it early in the morning, even when it came late. Sometimes the bus never came, for there was no work on the farm, even though there were workers anticipating work for the day. They simply had to return home disappointed when the bus did not arrive. They knew that the irregularity of transportation was the rule rather than the exception, and it goes without saying that the irregularity affected their work and income. When the farmer did not provide transportation, however, it was even more difficult for Louise to work. To find someone who could drive her to the farm would be rare good luck.

Every year Louise worked in the fields for three months, picking vegetables, hoeing, and sowing. There were two cycles of cultivation in which she participated. The first began in March, and it involved planting cabbage and lettuce. This was followed by hoeing the fields through April. In late May and June, the cabbage and lettuce were harvested. The second cycle, a duplicate of the first, began in late June and ended in October. Louise was involved in all these operations, except harvesting--on a part-time basis and only when farmers needed seasonal labor. (Farmers regularly employed efficient Filipinos and Mexicans to pick the lettuce and cabbage.) Additionally, in June and July, she picked string beans, turnips, strawberries, tomatoes, and berries.

Louise, like other seasonal workers, usually did hourly work, for which she was paid up to $2.50, though the minimum wage required by the law was $3.10. Workers were aware that the wages were never negotiable. If they did not accept the wages offered, they could not get the work they needed. Hence, no one attempted to negotiate them. She pointed out that seasonal workers have to accept such a "patron-client" relationship, in which they are entirely subordinate to the farmers, if they need seasonal work. Louise was occasionally offered more than $2.50, however, but only because the farmer knew her and her work. According to her, payment to the workers was made strictly in cash, never by

check. Therefore, she felt that there would be no record of the rate of wages paid or of the number of workers employed. Occasionally she did piecework. It was more profitable, but each person had to keep good records of the work they did. Otherwise, she warned, a worker would be easily cheated, for, in her view, farmers tended to swindle workers, and workers were inclined to steal each other's work.

Transiency and Present-Centeredness

Subordination to situation-centered conditions leads to transiency which further characterizes the lives of migrant farm workers. Their lives are governed by a variety of contingencies involving instability, unpredictability, and insecurity. Migrant workers move from one place to another without having the assurance of a final destination, and their concern is usually the here-and-now, which typifies transient people in general. We shall now focus attention on two migrant workers who exhibit these transient and present-centered attributes.

Tony was a Mexican migrant worker, aged 29, who had spent more than ten years in the United States traveling from one place to another in his search for seasonal work. He was one of the ten children born to a poor peasant family in a Mexican village. When he was 14 years old, his father was stabbed to death. It was such a traumatic experience for him and his family that he did not like to discuss it with anyone. In fact, this incident and perpetual poverty

radically altered Tony's early life. He began to drift around Mexican villages looking for a menial job when he was 15. Consequently he did not complete high school. Currently his four brothers and five cousins are engaged in migrant farm work, as he is. For a poor family like his, migrant work, said Tony, is often regarded as a readily available source of income because it does not require any formal training or previous experience. In fact, he and his siblings became aware that they could work as farm laborers without education when they were in their early teens.

We met Tony at a labor camp. When the yield of lettuce was good in Florida and in the Northeast, he worked, first in one place and then the other, as a lettuce loader. He specialized in loading because he was strong and he wanted to earn a higher income. In 1980 he came to Garden County to load lettuce for three months at the suggestion of his brother, who knew farmers in the county. When he arrived at the labor camp, however, he discovered that the farmer for whom he wanted to work did not have a good crop. He had to spend a number of days idle, and this loss of income created a problem for him. Although he could support himself with the small income at the camp, meals and shelter being provided by the farmer, he could not earn enough to send money to his mother and brother, who depended on him. In the previous year, he had managed to send $2,000 to his mother, and he hoped to send an equivalent amount in 1980.

He told us he had no savings except for a small amount of cash he would need for travel and meals when he was moving from one job to another.

Having worked alternately in Florida and the Northeast for several years, in 1979 Tony decided to try a new job. He went to Houston, Texas, and found a job in an oil refinery, sorting out irregular oil pipes. Though he was relatively content with the wage of $9.50 an hour, Tony quit the job in three months, for he did not want to work under the strict supervision of his immediate boss. Subsequently, he got a job as a wire cutter in Florida, with the assistance of his cousin, after he had wandered around for several weeks without any income. He was in desperate need of income because his money had run out. He worked as a wire cutter for six months, but gave up that job, too, for he wanted to go to San Francisco. There he met a Mexican who offered him a menial job sweeping the floor at a glass factory; he was offered only $2.75, just about half of what he was paid in Florida. Tony did not mind the low wages, however, for he liked the city and had opportunities to see many places. He felt liberated. In May 1980, needing more money, he quit the job to join his cousin in Garden County doing farm work. That year had been an eventful one for Tony, but he did not consider it unusual, as changing jobs and moving from one place to another were more a rule in his life than an exception. According to his account he had

managed to send money to his mother despite periodic occurrences of financial difficulty.

Tony had a few friends, acquaintances, and cousins on the East Coast, and one of them always made a reconnaissance trip to determine the availability of lettuce work. If he found work, Tony was immediately informed of it, so that he could drive up from Florida with his acquaintances and cousins or sometimes alone. He would stay on one farm until the lettuce work was finished and would then move on to another farm looking for the same job. Sometimes, this search took him as far as Michigan and Virginia. Unlike other Mexican and Filipino workers, who usually found jobs through recruiters, Tony found work without them. He believed that this gave him more freedom and enabled him to move without much constraint.

Although Tony was used to the work of a migrant worker, he disliked constantly encountering new environments, living among strangers, eating whatever meals were offered him, and sleeping in dark, filthy, little rooms. Nothing in his migrant life helped him establish a permanent identity. The people he met were only temporary acquaintances; few even knew his name. His own mother and brother did not know his whereabouts when he was traveling. When he occasionally received letters from them, they had often been mailed months earlier. Hence he could form no real feeling of what was going on in Mexico. Because he had no permanent

residence, no social anchorage, and only a few acquaintances, other people considered him an anonymous transient. He had no share in their lives or in their social bonds; indeed, he had no permanent place in their memories.

Tony said that he had not minded traveling about the United States during the previous decade. Now, however, as he approached 30, he began to feel the need for security and stability in his income, as well as his personal life. He was aware that he could not continue the backbreaking loading work for long. Though he had been healthy thus far, he was not sure that his good fortune would continue indefinitely. He alluded to his desire to abandon the life of a migrant, but said he did not know how to go about it. An anxiety was forming within Tony and forcing him to think about his future.

Like anyone else, socially marginal migrants, Tony said, desire permanency in social relations and, above all, personal stability and economic security. Tony often got the impression that Americans in higher social positions regarded migrant workers as insensitive to social mobility and willing to accept marginality as normal. Tony did not deny that he acquiesced in these traits, but he insisted that he had always wanted to improve his life, so that he might avoid the extreme poverty that had characterized his early life. He felt that he and his siblings had no

existentially viable choice in those years but to "wander around," to use his term, just to look for something better. This was his motivational basis that eventually led him to come to the United States to become a farm laborer.

Granting that marginality is a major feature of migrant work, Tony also found some excitement in his life. To begin with, he was alone and enjoyed a great deal of freedom and physical mobility. He learned that he could earn a living, for himself at least, at any place in the United States, as long as he was healthy, and that he could always quit a job to which he had only made a temporary commitment. When he quit a job, he had to bear no social stigma; he knew that drifting is the norm for marginal people. Hence, he took advantage of his mobility to indulge his curiosities. His exploration involved sexual ventures as well. He knew that as long as he was willing to spend money, he could find girls wherever he went. But Tony was now close to 30 years old. He was concerned with his future.

Fernando, another Mexican-American was no different from Tony with respect to his early socialization, poverty, marginality, and transiency. He was in his late 50s and had a sick wife and three children. He was keenly aware that instability and marginal work were major elements that determined his life. He commented: "I try to work as much as I can, so I can save a couple of dollars for tomorrow. But I don't know what will happen tomorrow. If there is no

work tomorrow, I do not make any money, and if I do not have any money, how do I live? I have a family and have to look after them. Many migrant workers don't save at all. They make money and spend it all, especially single ones. They gamble or they drink, just like that. A guy may get paid $200 on Friday and come back on Monday with empty pockets asking his friend to lend him a couple of dollars." Fernando's remark reflected his own life as well as those of other migrant workers with whom he worked. How did he become a migrant worker? How did he enter the transient life?

Like Tony, he was born in a Mexican village. His grandfather and father were farm workers. Prior to their seasonal work on the farm, both of them had wielded shovels building the railroad in Santa Fe. But the shovel was soon replaced by efficient machines, which led to the loss of many jobs including theirs. Subsequently they changed to farm work. Fernando vividly recalled that they crossed back and forth over the border to do seasonal work for about six months every year. By then, he was 7 years old, the youngest of six children who included four brothers and one sister.

Fernando and his brothers used to help his father. Though his father made 60 cents a day, the boys, in his recollection, made only 30 cents in all. His father insisted that his children did not need schooling to become

farm laborers and that he could not afford to send them to school. Nevertheless, his mother, who was illiterate like his father, believed that schooling was necessary for her children. Thanks to her, each of them received at least two to three years of education, which enabled them to read Spanish a little. Yet, because attending school on a regular basis was difficult, the oldest brother taught his younger brother a little reading and writing. Fernando, in his turn, was also taught by his older brother, but his sister never went to school at all, owing to his father's opposition.

Fernando worked on farms with his father until the age of 17, by which time he had his own immigrant visa. Wanting to be independent of his father, he decided to become an elevator operator in a hotel in San Antonio, Texas. After he had worked there for a couple of years, his boss recognized that he was a diligent and reliable boy and offered him a job in the bar at the hotel, which increased his earnings. This eventually led to his becoming a bartender for two additional years. As a bartender, he met many people including women, one of whom he married. After the marriage, Fernando decided to work for a steel company in Colorado, for it would allow him to work during the day, instead of at night. Though he and his wife went to the new place with hope for a better life, the company dismissed him within six months when it discovered that he had only a few

years of schooling and was not sufficiently literate for the job. He told us that other Mexican-Americans were also dismissed for similar reasons.

Shortly after that incident, his friends helped him participate in a governmental program in Colorado called WIN, which was on-the-job training. While Fernando was being trained to clean the gym floor in a school, he was paid $200 a month. Later, however, he discovered that although the federal government offered $700 for each trainee, he received only $200 from the local agency that trained him. He protested this practice over and over again, yet he was simply informed that he could quit the program if he did not like it. "Being fed up with all the unfairness and after some odd jobs here and there," as Fernando phrased it, he and his wife decided to return to Texas to work on farms close to his father's labor camp. Subsequently, in 1958, they moved to Salinas, California, expecting to earn a higher income at a larger farm.

Fernando and his wife worked in Salinas for only a few years and then moved to Florida, which is where he now works for at least six months of every year. For the rest of the year he did miscellaneous work in the state, which paid him only a little additional money. Hence it was necessary to draw on the income from his work on lettuce. For a few years he went to Michigan and Wisconsin seeking more

profitable seasonal work after the Florida lettuce season, but he could not make any more money there than in Florida.

Since the early 1970's, however, Fernando and his wife have come to Garden County to cut lettuce, for five months, from June through the middle of October. Because there are two lettuce harvests in Garden County, he makes more money there than elsewhere. At the end of October they return to Florida. He has found that working in Florida for six months and in Garden County for five months is most profitable, because he can concentrate more or less on lettuce-related work throughout the year.

When we met Fernando in 1980, he was with his family, which included his wife and three daughters, aged 9, 11, and 12. His was one of the ten families that lived in the labor camp, and he expressed a degree of contentment with life there. He felt that the farmer was kind, as he provided his family with two bedrooms, beds, a table, chairs, a small refrigerator, and an oven, all of which his family could use free. They had arrived at the camp at the beginning of June and planned to pick lettuce in June and July, for the first harvest, as well as in September and October, for the second. Fernando knew he would be idle from late July through early September, for lettuce needs this much time to mature. Fortunately, his farmer agreed to allow his family to stay in the camp during August, even though he was not working for him. This arrangement was especially helpful to

Fernando, because he could not afford to take his children and wife elsewhere during that period.

Fernando's wife had not been able to work in the fields for the past several years; in fact, her arthritis prevented her from engaging in any gainful work. Though this limited the family income, Fernando accepted it without complaint. He emphasized that his family would survive as long as he was healthy enough to work. As he was close to 60, he did not want to reflect on his age or how much longer he would be able to continue seasonal farm labor. He obviously was aware that he had no better alternatives, given his age, skills, and employment experience.

Nevertheless, Fernando was not without further hopes. He wanted to operate a service station, when he had enough money to buy one. "My biggest ambition right now," he said, "is to open up my own service station." He continued: "I am not that young anymore, and I am tired to work for somebody else and make somebody else rich. I would like to work for myself now. I would like for once in my life to tell people what to do." In light of Fernando's financial condition, achieving his ambition is likely to continue to elude him.

Fernando also hoped that his three daughters would complete their education, so as to be able to look after themselves, but he was not sure if all of them could. He was aware that moving from place to place was detrimental to

his children's education. Nevertheless, he wanted them to understand the existential reality that moving was inevitable, because that was how he made his living.

Absence of Personal Anchorage

Situation-centeredness refers to a relationship between people and their subjugation to both the environment and available opportunities. Each situation they encounter is defined by forces external to them. These people are subjected to situational conditions that define how they can meet their needs. They lack a personal anchorage, a characteristic of many farm workers. The experience of Joann Risso, who started farm work in her early teens, will illuminate how that condition develops.

Joann was born in Garden County, the sixth child in her family. Her parents were both poor whites who never had permanent jobs or secure employment; they worked as laborers on farms and in food processing factories. When she was in the sixth grade, her parents were divorced: one of many crises that affected her formative life. Throughout her childhood she never felt loved or cared for by her parents, and she developed deep-seated feelings of desertion and isolation. For Joann, her family was a source of the meagerest support and a hindrance to her ability to grow. While she lived with her parents and siblings, she was actually homeless and devoid of a personal anchorage within

her family. She attended school only because she had to. Her parents did little to encourage her education. Though their financial resources were slight, they often drank, which led to frequent fights with each other, some of which really scared Joann and the other children.

Uninterested in school, she quit in the sixth grade. Her mother, with whom she was living, was unconcerned and did not attempt to keep her in school. She stayed with her mother for several years more, sometimes earning money at farms, where she picked vegetables. Knowing that it was rare in her town for a native born, white American to quit school at the age of 11, she sought out Mexican and Puerto Rican farm laborers in their early teens, because she felt compatible with them and less conspicuous.

By the time Joann was 15, she felt mature enough to go to bars where young farm workers used to drop in. One day, sitting in one of these bars, she saw a dark-skinned Mexican who had just walked in to join some other men. She said, "hey" to him, and, in turn, he smiled at her and replied "yeah, yeah." She was not immediately attracted to the man, Orlando, as the other "guys" called him, though he was good-looking and kind to her. Thereafter he began to meet her regularly at the bar. Though he could not speak English fluently, she had little difficulty in communicating with him. In just several weeks they became very intimate with each other and decided to live together in the heart of

Garden County. Joann did not know much about his previous life, other than the fact that he came from Mexico, nor did he ask about hers. Both assumed that personal backgrounds did not matter as long as they loved each other. In fact, she was not even aware that he was an illegal laborer until a couple of years later.

For the first time in her life, Joann felt that she had met a person who cared for her, and she decided to follow him wherever he might go. They moved from one place to another in Garden County, doing all sorts of farm work, though Orlando's special interest was lettuce harvesting. He used to say to her, "I am tired of working here. Let's move." In the six years she shared her life with him, they stayed in practically every labor camp in the county. During the winter, he collected unemployment checks illegally. Joann thought he was shrewd and knew how to survive under adverse circumstances. Both assumed they could lose nothing, even if the illegality of his status and his illegitimate qualification for unemployment checks were discovered. In their view, all he would have had to do was to return to Mexico if his identity had been discovered. During those years they went to work in Florida during the winter only twice. Unlike other Mexicans, who regularly moved to Florida or returned home during the winter, Orlando preferred to stay in Garden County and rejoin the others when they returned in the spring.

Taking risks was customary for Joann and her consensual partner, as for other Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. For many migrant farm workers, Joann emphasized, there is no home. Nor are the future and past very relevant to them. She accepted their way of viewing life and their world. What is central to their lives is the present. While she lived with Orlando, she was introduced to various novel aspects of migrant farm life, though she was a child of laborers. In her view migrant workers are highly impulsive and likely to provoke confrontations, though they are generally well adapted to their lots and they show remarkable perseverance. They do not protest the work and wages offered them, nor their general environment, i.e., the matters they must accept. They differentiate between what they can negotiate and challenge and what they cannot, and judge their work, incomes, and living conditions as nonnegotiable. Joann related several anecdotes that support her observation of their disposition to challenge.

Several years ago, at one camp she lived in, a Filipino was shot to death by a coworker. After work, as the men were drinking amiably, an argument suddenly developed between two Filipinos. One called the other "a big son of a bitch," and the other took out his gun and shot him. The incident was over in a few minutes, except for the dozen state troopers who soon surrounded the camp. On another occasion, a Puerto Rican worker was beaten by white men.

That led to a confrontation between the migrants and the white men in which they threatened each other with guns. Joann observed that most migrant workers she met carried guns and lettuce knives to protect themselves. But provocation turns these into offensive weapons. When their feelings are upset, migrants sometimes go outside and smash their own cars. Joann also saw a Mexican pull out his gun and put it to the ear of his girlfriend and curse at her. She did mention, too, that many of the migrant workers are convivial and even kind when they are sober and in a good mood. When they drink they tend to lose their tempers and become unconstrained. This, she felt, is their way of expressing frustration and challenging their world.

Speaking of guns, Joann revealed that she had been arrested in Florida and charged with possessing them, at a time when Orlando was not present in their camp. Police confiscated a dozen guns that he had obtained to sell. She was detained in police custody until they determined that the guns were not hers.

Even though migrant workers are homeless people like Joann and Orlando, they work hard all day in the fields, their constrained and unnegotiable world. At the end of the day they are tired and hungry. Sometimes they work for twelve hours under the blazing sun. Yet they do not have even cold water to drink. When she worked with Orlando in the field, she had no choice but to drink warm water to

satisfy her thirst. She almost vomited when she drank it; it was not only warm but also unclean. Yet workers drink plenty of that kind of water without many complaints. When Orlando was exhausted, he did not say a word or pay attention to anything. He quickly ate the supper she prepared and went to sleep. He abruptly yelled at her when she spoke to him. From time to time he took "speed," just to keep himself awake and to regain temporary strength, or smoked pot. In the field, the heat was so strong that he sometimes had "sun stroke," complete fatigue caused by persistent heat.

After having lived together for six years, Joann and Orlando separated in 1980. Their daughter had been born three years previously. Orlando spent all the money he earned on liquor and gambling, as many of his coworkers did: a world of activity that they can challenge. He was a single man and did not have to send money home, unlike married Mexicans who usually send a large portion of their incomes to their families. He was a marginal man who had no anchorage in society or in his kinship and who found only transient acquaintances as he moved from one camp to another. Joann was his good companion for the six years they had shared. He never talked about his family in Mexico, nor was he interested in her past. He never spoke of his future plans, if he had any. He concerned himself with the immediate work that enabled him to earn a living.

He aggressively sought farm labor and worked hard in the field. He had little interest in his daughter. Instead, annoyed by her, he often shouted at her. As a result she feared him.

Joann was 21 years old when she and Orlando separated, an event occasioned by an incident that occurred early one morning. He got mad at her and pushed her against the headboard of the bed. She spit at him and immediately saw a sharp knife appear in his hand. He refrained from throwing it at her, however. Their separation happened as quickly as their consensual "marriage" did. Orlando complained to his friends that Joann threw him out. Meanwhile she started to "go out" with another Mexican worker. For her, as for Orlando, the main events of life evolved casually and ceased to exist quickly. She is afraid of making a permanent commitment to anything, as she confessed.

We spoke of the lack of personal anchorage in terms of the absence of a consistent frame of commitment. Present-time orientation is predominant among migrant farm workers. They perceive the world of farm work as a given and as a domain defined by conditions external to them. It is nonnegotiable, objective reality upon which they must depend to earn a living. As their lives are subjected to this reality, only the present is relevant. In one respect, their present-time orientation and the absence of a

consistent frame of commitment may be aptly viewed as resulting from adaptation to their situation-centered life.

We turn now to a seasonal laborer, a 30-year old black man, Chet Jenkins. In contrast to the previous case, he had more opportunities to improve his life, but he was no less present-oriented than Joann and Orlando. His attitude toward work and his sense of personal anchorage may be viewed as isomorphic to theirs. Unlike them, however, he was not a migrant worker, but a seasonal worker involved, by and large, in processing farm products.

Chet grew up in Harlem in New York City. His family moved to Garden County in 1965, when he was 15 years old. His mother's sister and brother, who lived in the county, were instrumental in his family's moving there. Although Chet's mother had lived in Harlem for nearly twenty years, she hated it and regarded it as a dangerous place for her children. She had reared her children without the assistance of their father, who did not live with them.

Chet attended a high school in the county and was admitted to a nearby state college as an EOF student. He told us that he went to college largely because he was given a scholarship, not because he was interested in academic work. Over the next two years, he continued to regard study as boring and repressive, though he developed an affinity for karate and boxing. He participated in several amateur boxing matches, and his coach praised his potential.

Nevertheless, at the end of the two years, he quit college. Subsequently, in 1970, he decided to join the National Guard and was sent to Texas for training. While he was stationed there, he was involved in a bloody fight with another trainee. He was charged with assault and jailed for three months. That resulted in dismissal.

Chet returned to Garden County to seek a job in 1972. Since then he has worked at food processing factories and farms to earn a living. In 1978 he was accepted in a CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act) program, through which he was sent to a county college for vocational training in printing; he received a certificate in 1979. Meanwhile, he worked at a food processing factory and made $200 per week during the harvest season.

Chet had coveted a Lincoln Continental for years, and one day he walked into a dealer's showroom. He reported that his weekly paycheck impressed the salesman, who persuaded him to purchase the Continental. Chet did so, having first persuaded his mother to lend him the $3,000 downpayment and financing the balance through the dealer, to whom he paid $300 a month. Six months later, the day before he was to receive his certificate from the county college, he went to Atlantic City "to have fun." On the way home, he was extremely tired and lethargic, owing to the previous sleepless night, and lost control of the car. He smashed into an electric pole, completely demolishing the car and

seriously injuring his knee. Fortunately, the power had been turned off five minutes prior to the accident. He was hospitalized for more than a month, and his license was revoked for a year.

For a long time, Chet had dreamed of owning the "best" car no matter how much it cost. He envied people in Harlem and his black friends who drove Lincoln Continentals. When he drove his for the first time, he felt as if he were an "upper-class" man and on a par with those people. But his dream ended quickly. He lost his car, his job, as well as his license, as a result of his accident. Chet admitted, however, that he could not have kept the car for long even if he had not been involved in the accident, because he could not have continued his monthly payments. Nevertheless, his accident enabled him to pay off the loan, for he received a big check from his insurance company to cover the damage to the car though he still owed the loan to his mother.

When we interviewed Chet in 1980, he was living with Pauline, a black woman with four children, in the apartment complex for low-income families where, the reader may recall, the Washington family had lived. He was 30 years old and she was 29. Chet had one of his sons with him; his former wife had custody of the other. Pauline, who was a divorcee, and Chet had lived together in her apartment for a year and a half. She received a welfare check, totaling

approximately $500 a month, and additional HUD assistance, which covered more than 60 percent of her rent. Furthermore, her children received free meals served in the apartment complex every day. Throughout her early life, she had never had a full-time job. When she needed additional income, she worked on farms during the harvest season. Chet was not qualified for welfare, since he had his own income. Pauline and Chet had no intention of marrying, for their marriage would reduce public assistance for her. Nevertheless they felt comfortable with their cohabitation.

Let's look at Chet's biography further. Shortly after he had been dismissed from the National Guard, he got a temporary job at a soup factory in the county. He learned that when employers in the food processing industry needed hourly workers during the harvest season, they were not interested in applicants' biographies, as long as they seemed to be competent to perform the relatively simple requirements of the jobs. Chet was afraid that they would have refused to employ him if they had found out about his criminal record. He also discovered that there was little difference between the qualifications for farm work and for food processing work, for both were manual labor. When jobs are available, employers offer them to suitable applicants without investigating their backgrounds in detail. After all, such jobs are held for only a few months; they do not require many skills or previous experience or employees'

sustained commitment to them. In fact, Chet was laid off six months later when his employer no longer needed unskilled labor.

While he worked at the factory, Chet got acquainted with a woman who was also employed there. They married in 1971. After he was laid off, he had to depend on her income, because, fortunately, she could continue to work at the factory during the nonharvesting season. In the spring and summer of 1972, he got work at a couple of farms and picked vegetables. Later that summer, Chet worked at another food processing factory, but was laid off again in February 1973. During the winter, he became a floor sweeper in theaters in a big city not far from Garden County. There he met people who encouraged him to resume his training for boxing, but he was not interested in becoming a professional boxer, even though he had won a couple of amateur boxing championships in the past. In spring, 1974, he returned to the farm. For another couple of years, he repeated this work cycle, while his wife complained about his erratic work pattern and his inability to contribute sufficiently to the family income. Subsequently, she divorced him in 1977 and took custody of their first son, while he was asked to raise their second son.

In spring, 1977, he got a job at the Chicken House, which the reader may recall from Gary Washington's story. In August he switched to a vegetable processing firm where

he earned a higher income. He continued to work at the firm through February and subsequently collected unemployment checks for two months. Fortunately he was asked to work for this firm again in June. It was in the fall of that year that he decided to buy a Lincoln Continental.

When we interviewed him, he was again working at the Chicken House, deboning chickens, and planning to return to a processing factory later in the summer when it required more labor. But whether he could work every day at the Chicken House depended on transportation provided by his acquaintances at the factory, for his driver license was revoked, and he did not own a car.

Thus far no major conflict had occurred between Pauline and Chet. She did not have to depend on him, and he could earn at least enough income to feed himself and his son, though he did not have a permanent job. He did not have to pay rent, most of it being paid by the public subsidies Pauline received. They were content with this arrangement.

Unlike Joann and Orlando, whose income came only from labor in the field, Chet was not initially subjected to situation-centered conditions. Chet had an opportunity to go to college with public subsidies, yet he failed to take full advantage of that support. Later he also received vocational training under the CETA program. Again he failed to seize an opportunity to gain a more stable source of

income. His life in the past ten years has been characterized by instability, predominance of present-time orientation, tentativeness of commitment, and subordination to various situations. His failure to exploit opportunities and his attitudes and behavior decidedly contributed to placing him in a situation-centered relationship to society.

Consequently Chet was drawn into a cycle of seasonal work and periodic unemployment. Even his wife deserted him for his failure to make a consistent commitment to his home. Though he failed to exploit work opportunities, he challenged his external world by exhibiting his physical prowess in boxing and by driving a luxurious car. He ended up cohabiting with a woman with four children, and he even depended on her in part. He was now subjected to situational conditions that determined how he could meet his needs. He became homeless.

Joann and Orlando were strict farm laborers and received little support from society. They wandered, seeking work, all over the county and in Florida. On the other hand, Chet was a seasonal worker whose work was seasonally determined as much as theirs. Though they had quite different backgrounds, they now confronted similar conditions and similar problems that deprived them of a consistent frame of commitment.

Lack of Distant Goals

So far in this chapter we have considered six cases of migrant and seasonal farm workers in an attempt to shed light upon the situation-centered life they share. We have discussed salient characteristics of their lives: subordination to situational conditions, transiency and present-centeredness, absence of personal anchorage. Each case presented here involves all these characteristics in one way or another, for they constitute an independent relationship in the context of workers' adaptation to limitations imposed upon them. To better understand each characteristic, we have drawn upon the various contexts of workers' experiences that would most aptly illustrate the significance and meaning of the characteristic.

Here we shall try to bring these characteristics to bear upon the absence of personal, distant goals as it relates to migrant farm workers' lives. Earlier in this chapter we saw the world that Mary and Louise encountered; they were subordinated to situational conditions that determined the kind of work available to them, the wages they received, the duration of the work, and other related conditions of life. Mary was misinformed and misled about the income that she and her husband expected to earn. When crops were poor, they had no choice but to acquiesce in an unjustifiably low income. They were even inhibited from complaining about the conditions under which they worked and

lived. Also, their alternatives were severely limited. On the other hand, Louise was a patient job-seeker and worker, like a hunter waiting for game to appear. Her job and income often depended on information transmitted by word of mouth and on unreliable transportation offered her and other local workers.

Mary's and Louise's subordination to situational conditions contributed significantly to undermining their personal, distant goals, if any. Both intend to continue migrant and seasonal farm work, despite their subordination to situational conditions, for they have few alternatives. Mary's goal, however, is to finish high school, if possible, to get an "inside" job at a food processing factory. But she is not sure if she will be able to achieve even this goal.

Here it may be relevant to relate our study to the findings of George Foster, the anthropologist. He argues that people's cognitive orientation toward their own lives and their society is defined by their perception of the environment in which they live. More specifically, he speaks of poor peasants in a Latin American society. According to Foster they regard both the quantitative and qualitative resources available to them as finite. This "image of limited good," as he called it, contributes to the lack of cooperation among peasants for improvement in material and nonmaterial aspects of life and the absence of

initiatives for social change, i.e., cooperating and taking the initiative would mean either a gain or loss of the limited good for cooperators and initiators. Foster (1969) suggests that their cognitive orientation is shaped by how they view the availability of social and natural resources and their access to them.

Foster's observation applies to migrant and seasonal farm workers' situation, in which they consider resources limited and define the relationship of the present to the future. Mary's and Louise's environments are not conducive to defining their distant goals. Instead, in those environments they viewed their present exigencies as most crucial. In other words, situation-controlled life did not permit viable commitment beyond the current exigencies and demands inherent in poverty.

We spoke of transiency and present centeredness as predominant characteristics exhibited by Tony and Fernando. The conditions of poverty under which Tony grew up did not permit him to complete high school. When he was in his teens, it was more critical that he contribute to the family income than for his future. He found farm work most readily accessible, for it did not require any training or experience. As long as he was in good health and could persevere in his strenuous work in the field, he learned that he could earn a living. Though farm work is seasonally determined and does not guarantee continuous employment at

one place, Tony did not mind that. He approached each job tentatively and casually. He knew there was no regularity in farm labor and no certainty of an adequate income. Just as his world of work offered him no lasting security, he responded by withholding his commitment to it.

Tony was able to see the present as the most critical dimension of his life, since it prescribed his immediate experience. He learned to like situation-centered and present-oriented activities, which were, in a sense, adventuresome and enabled him to be mobile. Although he had no other plans, he had begun to worry about his ability to continue as a migrant farm worker.

When we study Mexican farm workers, we discover isomorphic biographic patterns that reflect economic conditions of poverty, the culture of illiterate peasantry, large families, and the struggle for survival. Fernando is another illustration of such patterns. His family was large and extremely poor. His parents were illiterate, and the children had to contribute to the family income just to survive. Fernando became a farm laborer because farm work was most accessible to him. He tried other jobs but not successfully. Subsequently he moved back into the migrant stream in the late 1950s. Yet the current conditions of his life are not substantially different from what they were earlier, as reflected in his remark: "I try to work hard as much as I can, so I can save a couple of dollars for

tomorrow. But I don't know what will happen tomorrow." Tomorrow is uncertain for him, as it is for other migrant workers. His primary goal is to survive today.

Turning to Joann, she was not much different from Tony. Both were transient and lacked a personal anchorage in life. Given her socialization, meager education, and poverty, it was impossible for her to perceive any distant goal for herself. Even when she became 21 years old, her perspective did not change. She saw her life as one of adapting to exigencies in her environment. Events that influenced it evolved without plans; they were merely the results of her encounters with various situations.

Chet might have had the opportunities to hold a secure job and make a stable life, if only he had articulated distant goals for himself and worked for them. Among the laborers discussed in this chapter, he alone had an opportunity for a college education and also vocational training. Yet he led himself into a cycle of seasonal work and unemployment.

Most of the migrant and seasonal farm workers we have studied have developed low expectations of themselves. They are primarily concerned with day-to-day living and a guaranteed minimum income that will enable them and their families to be self-reliant. They commonly expressed a concern with the uncertainty of farm labor. Being a part of

the underemployed human resource, they were prone to exploitation when they sought to earn a living.

A sociologist, Robert K. Merton (1968), has developed a typology of individual adaptation that has relevance for our analysis. He suggests that individual goals and institutional means necessary for the accomplishment of those goals are central to understanding individual adaptation to society. Migrants' and farm workers' humble personal goals can be viewed as a functional response to the lack of access to the institutional means that would enable them to achieve more ambitious goals. It is this very lack of access to institutions in the occupational sphere that contribute to the absence of distant goals on the part of migrant and seasonal workers.

In Chapter I, we showed the reader how difficult it was for Roberto to realize his expectations that would lead to greater security for his family. From the formative years of his life until he came to a labor camp in Garden County, he had struggled to support his family as a farm laborer. When he first came to the United States with his family, he was optimistic about establishing a decent life. When he failed miserably in that attempt, he felt ashamed and lost confidence in his ability ever to make his family secure. Later he sought to organize a union of farm workers that, he assumed, would improve their working conditions and provide them with more security, but again he had to give up his

campaign. In 1980 he could barely support himself, having been completely misled by the labor recruiter. Anger and depression overwhelmed him.

Francisco and his wife never had Roberto's aspiration. Knowing that their lack of skills rendered them unfit for most other occupations, they both preferred farm labor to manual labor in factories. Recall, though, that their son was concerned that the backbreaking nature of farm labor would take too great a toll of his life. Though not then qualified for a more cerebral occupation, he planned to finish high school and to prepare for a more stable occupation that would let him live securely.

Gary Washington struggled in his own way to build a foundation for his future. His efforts too, were not rewarded. Consequently, he felt powerless and overwhelmed by the external forces influencing him. He was gradually drawn into seasonal work. Unlike Gary, Al and Joan Jackson were relatively content with farm work. They saw their work and income as acceptable and even appropriate to them. They acquiesced in what was offered by the farmer, instead of seeking material comfort and social mobility. Because they assumed that the farmer was trustworthy, they refused to think about the following day and the following year. They were content as long as they had work and could feed their children. Their attitudes might be summarized as reflecting what Merton calls the adaptive pattern of ritualism. It is

a form of adaptation to their world based on lowered expectations and compliance with social norms.

In summary, the absence of distant goals in the life of migrant and seasonal laborers is a common consequence of the lack of access to natural and social resources. To envisage distant personal goals requires one's perception that institutional means to actualize them are available to him or her. The subordination of migrant and seasonal laborers to situational conditions deprives them of judging the future as relevant.

Chapter III

Farm Workers' Children

In this chapter, we will discuss the socialization that the children of farm workers undergo. We are particularly concerned with exploring several questions: How do these children first come into being in their situation-centered world? What are their environments? What are their parents' attitudes toward schooling? Who among them become migrant workers? These questions gain particular significance when they are explored in the context of life and experience. Hence, we will devote our attention to the context of that social life unique to farm workers' children.

Born into the Situation-Centered World

Farm workers' children are born, by and large, of very young parentage. Most of those we interviewed were born before their parents reached the age of 25. Some eldest children were born when their parents were 14 or even younger. Young migrant workers are initiated to sexual experience and marry at a much earlier age than is customary among other groups, and more often than not this results in early parenthood.

Courtship frequently takes place as they travel and work together in the fields. Particularly for young migrant workers, their work and their travel form the best

opportunity to make acquaintances and intimate friends. This environment is a significant part of their world. Courtship also occurs when transient young men meet girls in adjacent communities and towns.

It will be recalled from Chapter I that Francisco and his wife, Rosa, used to travel and work together before they married, because their families worked for the same farmers. Rosa was only 15 years old when she married. All four of her children were born before she reached 23. Her son, Bendi, was 17, loading lettuce with his uncle in Florida when he first met his wife, who was then just 15. Within six months they married and had a baby. Likewise, Roberto, a Mexican migrant worker, married a 15-year-old girl when he was 17. Both of them were farm laborers in a Mexican village. They had six children in the ten years after their marriage. Also, in the previous chapter we introduced Joann, a native, white, American woman, who met a Mexican migrant in a local bar when she was 15. Thereafter they became intimate and decided to live together. Three years later they had a baby. Similarly, Mary, a black migrant, was 15 when she quit high school to attend to her baby. Her husband was 19 at the time of their marriage. They met each other in the fields in Florida.

In an attempt to shed some light upon this entire situation, we shall here introduce two other cases. The first case involves Pat and her two migrant children. It

will reveal some conditions characteristic of the environment in which potential migrant children are born and in which they become actual migrants. Pat represents a group of migrant and seasonal workers who, despite having had parents employed in other occupations, found farm work the most readily available when they needed to earn a living. Pat was a white American migrant who first started farm work as recently as 1975 and came to Garden County with her second husband in the late 1970s. When she was a small child, she and three sisters were placed in foster families. They came from a broken home, both of their parents having deserted them. As a result, Pat was brought up by a medical doctor's family in Denver, Colorado, for a few years, but she was forced to leave that home as well, because it began to have its own problem. Subsequently she was placed in an orphanage with her younger sister. Quitting high school in her senior year, she started to work as an assistant to a rehabilitation technician in a hospital. While working there, still just 18 years old, she married another hospital worker. Within five years or so, four children had been born and the couple was divorced because of the "traumatic" relationship.

Following her divorce, Pat married a Mexican laborer in Colorado. He had just been granted reentry to the United States, having previously been deported for working illegally as a sanitation man in Denver. Pat and her

husband came to Garden County to do farm work two years ago, bringing with them her two daughters, aged 11 and 12, the other two children remaining with their father in Colorado. This was the beginning of migrant life for the couple and the four children.

The second case is a Puerto Rican family consisting of Pedro, his wife, and five children. The oldest child is mentally retarded, mute, and deaf. The second oldest child is a son who has just graduated from high school and has been admitted to college. This being a very rare occurrence among the Puerto Rican families of farm laborers, his parents are immensely happy. The other three children are, respectively 17, 15, and 13 years old and attend local schools. Unlike the second son, they have various kinds of learning problems.

Pedro himself was one of 16 children, all brought up in Puerto Rico. He attended school very little and married his first wife when he was only 16. They had five children. Subsequently he married a divorcee who shared his lack of formal schooling and had a mute child by her first husband. Four children were born to them. Pedro was 49 years old when we met him in 1980.

Pedro started to travel to the mainland with his father to do migrant work when he was only 12. He had continued to travel back and forth between Garden County and Puerto Rico until 1976, when his entire family moved to Garden County

where he and his wife worked as farm laborers. Lately his wife has stopped working in the fields because of illness. In 1980 Pedro earned only $3.10 per hour for his work.

Considering briefly seasonal farm families, we note that their children are also born of similarly young parentage and in situation-centered environments. The reader will recall the Jackson family, whose profile was presented earlier. Al and Joan Jackson were only 17 and 18 years old when they had their first child, and they had meager financial resources to live on. Despite living conditions little improved since then, they have nine children, all born at their labor camp. Recall, too, Ann Washington's first child, born when Ann was only 12 years old. At the age of 20, she was expecting her fifth baby.

Additionally, there are other common ascriptive elements that constitute the environment into which farm workers' children are born. In the term "environment" we include not only physical and socioeconomic conditions, but also familial and interpersonal variables and characteristics of parental educational attainment. Most migrant and seasonal farm children are born into and grow up in situation-centered environments. In the previous chapter, we discussed attributes of situation-centeredness that characterize the conditions under which farm workers live and work, as well as their behavioral and cognitive orientation. Situation-centeredness consists in a symbiotic

association of elements, including: subordination to situational conditions, transiency, present-centeredness, and the relative absence of social and personal anchorages, as well as remote goals. Farm workers and their families are variably subjected to such aspects of life, which define their existential situation. Although all farm laborers are generally restrained by situational conditions inherent in migrant and seasonal work and its infrastructural conditions, some may maintain the integrity of personal anchorages, as exhibited by members of Francisco's family and the Jacksons. Further, we have shown that some migrant workers, including Roberto, are able to endure subordination to situational conditions without entirely losing distant goals; they work hard for their families. But, by and large, migrant and seasonal farm workers are likely to display most features of situation-centeredness. Most migrant and seasonal farm children begin their lives in such a world, governed by uncertain situational conditions and characterized by transiency and the absence of a social anchorage.

Furthermore, most parents have meager schooling and little occupational training useful for other jobs. Their schooling varies from none to some high school education. By and large, Puerto Rican and Mexican parents completed only elementary education. White and Black American parents, on the other hand, have a few more years of

education. In general, the younger the parents, the more education they have attained. Some farm workers, on the one hand, are quite conscious of their lack of educational qualification for other occupations; others, on the other hand, never think about alternatives. The former are individuals who seek alternatives to gain greater security for their children and families. Recall that even Bendi, Francisco's son, who had more schooling than most migrant workers, was critically aware that he would not be able to get a more secure and permanent job until he had a high school diploma. His concern was to provide a stable environment for his family. Mary, a young black migrant, wanted to get an "inside" job for the same reason, but she knew she could not get one unless she completed her high school education.

Environments

Farm workers' children can be classified as either seasonal or migrant. Seasonal children stay all year in the same general vicinity, whereas migrant children migrate periodically as their parents search for farm work. Typically, migrant children are likely to remain in one area for less than six months, as their parents' farm work generally lasts only for that period of time. For example, the migrant families we encountered come up to Garden County from the southern states every May and remain there until

the middle or end of October when the harvesting of crops is completed.

In general, however, migrant children include not only those already mentioned, but also a variety of other children of those families that move periodically to seek work in agriculture, fishing, or related food processing industries. Generally defined, the term "migrant" applies for up to one year after the last move. Children who remain in a given area for longer than one year are called "former migrants." Because of this broad definition, migrant children are diverse, and we concern ourselves here only with farm migrant children.

The majority of farm migrants in Garden County are single men, typically Puerto Ricans, who work under governmental contract, Mexicans, and Filipinos. Nevertheless, a significant number of migrant farm families also come to the county every year. They are generally black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican families and less frequently other ethnic groups. They remain in Garden County for three to six months, living in labor camps or, occasionally, detached houses provided by the farmers. Obviously, these living quarters become an essential part of their children's environment.

The reader may recall the labor camp where Mary, a black migrant, spent the summer of 1980. Because it represents a typical accommodation for families, we shall

look at it further to see how facilities like these establish a child's environment. This camp houses blacks exclusively, both migrant and seasonal families. It is located by a main county highway, approximately two miles away from the farmer's residence and the other residential area. It is also separated from the residential district by a deserted railroad that crosses the county road. Originally connected to the shipping area for the farmers' cooperative, the railroad was in service until ten years ago. The camp is surrounded by agricultural fields and clearly isolated from the rest of the farming community. Built about twenty years ago on a one-and-a-half-acre lot, the camp consists of three rows of long, concrete barracks, each of which contains eight family units.

The camp becomes an active place every spring and summer, though its isolation from the community remains the same. As soon as migrant families move into the camp every June, they transform it into a gregarious community. Before then, the camp appears rather desolate, as only a few families remain there throughout the year. All the migrant families share common facilities, including the single shower room and the lavatories that are attached to one end of the third building. Running water for cooking is available next to these facilities. Seasonal families, however, have running water available inside their units, a privilege given to those workers who remain at the camp

throughout the year. Between the first and second barracks buildings is a common ground used by both children and adults. During the day, children can usually be seen playing and running about on the common grounds. It has no playground equipment, but the children have no place else to go. The women who remain in camp during the day also meet there to chat with one another, and in the late evening, after a hard day's work, the men also assemble there to talk and drink beer. Dusty as this area is, it is a popular place for communication and activity, and it functions to promote socialization among the children, women, and men.

It is also on this common ground that children wait for school busses. Every morning during the summer, a school bus arrives at the camp at 7:30 to pick up the elementary school children. They attend summer school for migrant children, which begins at 8:00 a.m. They must leave early because they receive breakfast at a modern air conditioned school, which, incidentally, presents a totally different environment for them. Breakfast is followed by remedial programs in math, reading, and writing. At noon they are given lunch, which is followed by recreational and extracurricular activities, such as a trip to a museum or a show. These children return to the camp at 3:00 p.m. Likewise, the few kindergarten children at the camp attend summer school, which also offers all-day programs and two meals. Though there is a summer school program for

secondary children, no one at the camp is interested in attending it, for they must work in the fields. As the younger children return to the camp, the common ground again serves as the major area for their activities. In 1980, when we interviewed families at the camp, a total of sixteen children attended summer school. In addition to those, there were two babies and seven adolescents in the camp.

The black families who come to this labor camp tend to return to it every year, as in the case of Mary's family. As you will recall, John Foster, the crew leader, has organized trips from southern Florida to Garden County for these families for the past seven years. They are all related to his family in one way or another, and he recruits them for farm labor during the late spring and summer. Hence their children's schooling is not normally interrupted as they return to Florida in early September, where the families continue farm work. In the 1960s and early 1970s, John's family used to move up to New York State for five months from June through November. John's family at the camp included himself, his wife, and four children, aged 14, 16, 17, and 18. In addition, his eight other children have their own families, three of them having accompanied him to the camp. John's wife insisted that the environment of the camp was good for her children as well as for others', because in her view, this isolated environment prevented them from "getting into trouble" during the summer. Her

major concern with her children was to keep "clothes and shoes" on them and to keep them away from involvement in "trouble."

Let us now turn to another camp where Felipe and his family lived. When we visited for the first time, we saw five children assembling a bicycle on the front yard of the labor camp. One boy was taking a wheel from a wrecked bike, while another was shining a bell. Two other boys were adjusting a rather rusty handlebar, and the fifth boy was trying to remove the chain from another rusty bike. Though the parts they gathered were old and rusty, the tools they were using, wrench, pliers, hammer, and screwdriver, seemed new. We asked them where they got used bikes. One of them replied promptly that they found them at a junkyard a mile and a half away. He got the tools from his father's station wagon parked in the yard.

These boys were concentrating on their work so intensely that we could hardly interrupt them. Obviously they were enjoying their collaborative project. One boy asked whether we wanted to see his parents, as if he did not want to be disturbed further. He was Jose, Felipe's first son, who was 14 years old. Another boy was Tony, Jose's brother, age 9. The third was a neighbor, and the other two boys were visiting from the residential area located about two miles away.

These boys were working together in the middle of a

yard that separated two rows of shacks. At one end of the yard three cars and a station wagon were parked, and the other end led to an unpaved farm road. Weeds grew here and there.

This camp consists of nine detached living quarters occupied by families. It is located between large fields in which cabbages and onions grow. Like John Foster's camp, this is also isolated from the residential area by at least a couple of miles. Hence it would be difficult for a stranger to find it without assistance. Unlike John's camp, however, this camp offers detached living quarters, each consisting of two small bedrooms and a combined living room and kitchen. At our request, Esperanza, Felipe's wife, showed us around their lodge. Closest to the entrance was the living room-kitchen, about nine by twelve feet, containing a sofa, two chairs, a table, an old refrigerator, and also a telephone, a rare item at a labor camp. On the immediate right was the bedroom the children used and next to it another used by Esperanza and Felipe. Both rooms were about the same size as the living room. Left of the living room was a bathroom, which included a shower. Fortunately Esperanza had running water and a gas stove in the kitchen. She paid no rent but had to pay for utilities.

Felipe and Esperanza had three children: Jose, Tony, and Carol, who was 12 years old. They had come to this camp from Mobile, Alabama, in late March 1980, when we

interviewed them. Subsequently their children had to transfer to a nearby school. Luckily, the social worker who worked for the school knew these children and the family well because they had been there several times previously. One of his responsibilities being the recruitment of migrant children, he helped them complete their placement in the school as soon as they arrived at the camp. In fact, he exhibited an appreciable familiarity with Esperanza and her children when he introduced us to them for the first time. He characterized them as good pupils who did better than average school work. Also he regarded Esperanza as cooperative and concerned about her children. In turn, the three children found school stimulating and their classmates friendly. Jose, the oldest child, especially seemed to enjoy school and to derive confidence from his experience there. They did not regard moving as especially constraining or detrimental to them as long as they had friends in both places.

During the summer, the children did not attend summer school, though they were eligible. Esperanza told us that they did not have to go to summer school because they were not behind in major subjects. Instead, they chose to work in the fields with their parents when piecework became available for the family. When his father picked lettuce and cabbage with other workers, Jose participated. For about two weeks, the entire family worked in an onion field.

They woke up about 4:00 a.m. and were in the field by 5:00. They worked continuously until 3:00 p.m., when they stopped for the day because the sun was too strong to work longer. Though it was hard work, the children, even the youngest, did not mind it because they received an allowance every day they worked.

Although the camp was geographically isolated, that did not deter the children from visiting their friends in the residential area when they did not have to work in the fields. Their friends also visited their camp, as mentioned earlier. Thus these children did not feel unusually isolated. When we were interviewing Esperanza, there were four phone calls, two of which were for Carol.

Though Felipe did not speak English well and Esperanza spoke it with a Spanish accent, their children's command of English was excellent. Carol, who was often present when we interviewed her parents, frequently interpreted for her father. She looked confident and seemed genuinely interested in our interview. All three children could speak both English and Spanish for their parents spoke Spanish in the home. Incidentally, both Felipe and Esperanza had been born of Mexican parentage in Texas and had grown up as migrant children as well.

During the past four years, this family had worked in Garden County for seven months, from April through October,

and in Alabama for five months; in Alabama Felipe worked as a hog breeder and Esperanza worked in a laundry.

We shall now turn to seasonal farm children. Unlike migrants, a majority of seasonal farm workers live in cities and towns in Garden County. Most of them rent apartments of various types, but some manage to own private homes. As noted earlier, some few seasonal workers are permitted to remain in the labor camps and single houses owned by farmers all year round; recall from Chapter I that the Jacksons, a black family, had lived in a labor camp for many years. There were also seasonal families in the camp where John Foster stayed, who had the privilege of remaining there during the off-season as well. Such families are obligated to work for the farmers who own the camps and shacks when the farm season starts. The other seasonal workers tend to converge in cities and towns, however, partly owing to housing shortages in the vicinity of large farms and partly because they do not seek farm work exclusively, but other jobs also. As pointed out elsewhere, seasonal farm jobs are readily available to unskilled, underemployed people. Therefore, cities and towns always harbor a potential source of seasonal labor.

Earlier we referred to the Washingtons who lived in a large apartment complex developed for 200 low-income families. In that complex we identified more than a dozen seasonal families for the purpose of our research, among

other such families. Unemployed and underemployed black people in that complex often seek farm work as a seasonal source of income. Some of them may not return to the fields every year if they find more gainful jobs elsewhere, but there will always be other people interested in farm work. Farm work is convenient for them because farms are located within a thirty-minute drive. This apartment complex is located at the fringe of the largest city in the county, into which minority groups, especially blacks, have migrated in the last two decades. About ten miles north of this city is another town that also supplied farm labor. It has a notable concentration of Puerto Ricans, many of whom also engage in farm labor.

Children of such seasonal farm families live in a semiurban environment. Although their parents work in the fields, some of these children have never seen vegetables growing. Nevertheless, by virtue of the fact that their parents are farm laborers, the children are often identified as migrant or former migrant children, depending on how long the parents have been involved in farm labor. Otherwise they are viewed as seasonal farm children. At any rate, in such an urban like environment a variety of characteristics derived from parental involvement in farm labor are attributed in children. In other words, there is a wide spectrum of children who fall under the rubric "migrant-seasonal children." But what is common among them is their

participation in social life in the context of an urban like settlement.

Let us return to the apartment neighborhood just referred to. As it is situated at least two miles from the nearest settlement, it constitutes a somewhat self-contained environment for children. As noted before, it is mostly occupied by black families, the majority of whom, according to our informants, receive welfare and HUD subsidies. The families we interviewed were no exceptions. The adjacent settlements also consist of black families.

In this apartment neighborhood, there are no particular characteristics unique to the children of farm laborers. Their environment and their parent's socioeconomic status, as well as racial attributes, are commonly shared by the children of other families.

After school and during the summer the children spend most of their time in the compound of the apartment complex. Because there are no playgrounds or other recreational facilities for them, they usually converge on parking lots for play and other shared activities. When the weather is very hot they seek areas shaded by buildings. When apartments remain vacant for a while, the children often vandalize them, breaking windows and writing graffiti on the walls. Our informants characterized children there as "violent and rough." For example, Ann Washington, whom the reader met in Chapter I, kept her five children inside as

much as she could for that very reason. Her husband, Gary, was quite critical of children's behavior in the neighborhood and attributed it to the fact that children are often unsupervised and ignored by their parents. Another informant discussed with us his plan to move out of the neighborhood for the safety of his 9 year-old daughter who had severe asthma. He and his wife feared she would no longer be able to cope with the roughness to which she had previously been subjected. Whether or not violence, roughness, and vandalism occur frequently, we did not observe them when we visited the neighborhood. It is understandable, however, that these children's constrained environment and lack of parental supervision are conducive to the behavior referred to above.

Eligible children receive publicly subsidized breakfast every morning at the cafeteria within the apartment complex. During the summer, children of the farm families can attend summer school if they are interested in it. But more often than not, parents in this neighborhood are not aware of the eligibility of their children for summer school. Gary Washington was one of these parents. Because a number of families do not have automobiles or telephones, registering for summer school is often difficult for them. The only available public telephone is located a mile away.

Discovering their problem, we volunteered to help Gary and other families to register their children for the summer program.

Parents' Attitudes Toward Education

One's goals are invariably influenced by the means available to attain them. Thus goals cannot truly be defined independent of means. When a wide disjunction exists between the two, two modes of adaptation become possible. First, one can redefine the goals to make them compatible with the means. Second, one can reject the socially and culturally legitimate means available, reject the original goals, or reject both means and goals, choosing alternatives to replace them. As a corollary, it is possible that one will reject both means and goals without replacing them. Adaptation is a sustained process in which the individual responds to these conditions of society that determine individual access to social and natural resources.

We have seen that migrant and seasonal farm workers often employ the first mode of adaptation. They redefine their personal and social goals within the framework of their scarce resources: employable skills, conditions under which they are employed, income, nature of their work, personal assets. We pointed out earlier that farm laborers and their families are subjected to situational conditions--conditions defined in each new situation they encounter,

over which they have little control. This state produces their transiency, present-centeredness, and relative absence of personal and social anchorages and remote goals. This is the general social context of migrant and seasonal life in which farm workers' children grow up and in which parents develop expectations regarding their children's schooling.

Francisco, whose biography we sketched earlier, and his wife, regarded education as "very important." They insisted that one could not get a decent job without a high school education. They stated further that the transiency inherent in their migrant life did not significantly impede their children's schooling.

The biographies of Francisco's family members, however, reveal an apparent contradiction between his emphasis on education and their actual scholastic attainments. Francisco quit school in the ninth grade, and his wife had quit much earlier. Their oldest son also quit school, in the eleventh grade, because he was more interested in earning an income and getting married, and his parents did not object to his withdrawal from school. (He later realized that only a high school diploma could help him secure the stable employment he sought.) Francisco's eldest daughter completed elementary education only. Instead of continuing, at the age of 13 she married. Though her parents were disappointed with her decision for the early marriage, they acquiesced in it. Likewise, Francisco's

second daughter dropped out of school in the sixth grade because she was said to suffer from a disability. Francisco's youngest son, who was in the 4th grade continued his schooling, but complained that moving with his parents caused him to miss many days of school. He alluded to his loss of interest in education.

Undoubtedly, Francisco and his wife held a common perception of the efficacy of schooling in fostering upward mobility within the dominant strata of society. That their children failed to complete secondary education, however, may reflect their subjugation to the situational conditions that influenced their every thought and action. Schooling requires a sustained commitment for a number of years, which requires an appreciable measure of stability of family and resources. Migrant and seasonal work, always subject to situational conditions, is not conducive to such a commitment. Therefore, the contradiction between parents' normative beliefs about the effect of schooling on their children and their actual commitment to schooling have to be, in part, accounted for by the external conditions influencing their orientation and behavior. In other words, when the means to achieve educational goals are unclear and limited, the goals are redefined to make them achievable within the limits of the available means. This reflects the first mode of adaptation cited earlier.

A related factor is that Francisco and his wife did not consider any careers for their children but migrant work. As farm labor does not require much schooling, they may have acquiesced in their children's failure to attain secondary education. Their oldest son and oldest daughter later came independently to the realization that they needed more schooling to gain access to other jobs. In fact, the daughter confessed that she did not like farm labor and wanted her husband to work in an auto shop. Her ultimate desire was to make her little baby a professional, such as a lawyer or a doctor, respected by the public.

We have noted that when the resources available to farm workers are limited, their expectations for their children's schooling are lowered. Francisco's family provided an example illustrating this point. We shall now compare that example with the experiences of other families.

As detailed previously, the Jackson family had eight children ranging in age from 2 to 15. Six of them were attending school. Though both Al and Joan Jackson had dropped out of school as teenagers, none of their children had emulated them. When Joan discussed education with us, she expressed her hope that her children would all attend high school, though she did not consider a high school imperative for all children. She worried that her 15-year-old son might leave school soon because the quality of his work was deteriorating. Disappointed though she was, she

and her husband believed they were powerless to prevent his dropping out. She felt that her second son might be able to go to college because he was bright, though she admitted her lack of knowledge about what college education would entail. She told us the remaining children were doing average schoolwork. Joan and Al had not thought about their children's careers. Instead, they were concerned with their children's lives in their present context and their relative acquiescence in it. As alluded to here, the Jacksons were preoccupied with the present, which may be viewed as a function of situation-centered life.

Let us turn to another Mexican-American family for further comparison. Like Francisco's, this family, headed by Julio Sanchez, was a typical Mexican migrant household. Everyone in it, except the younger children had been engaged in migrant work. For the past several years his family had migrated to Garden County from Florida every spring. During those years, he had been a crew leader, responsible for recruiting migrant workers.

Julio had seven children ranging from 8 to 21 years of age. The oldest child, his first daughter, recently married a lettuce cutter Julio had recruited. She dropped out of school in the ninth grade; his second daughter, aged 19, also quit school. The remaining three children, ages 12, 9, and 8, were attending school.

Though Julio's four older children had all dropped out of school between 12 and 15, he and his wife were not especially disappointed, for each of them had received individually more education than the parents had together. Julio had attended school for only two years, and his wife four. They did not deem high school education useful for farm work, as attested by the comments of a son. The son pointed out that much of what he had learned in the later years of schooling was "useless" to him. He believed that most of the students with whom he had gone to school simply wasted time "fooling around, talking about girls, drinking, or smoking marijuana." Rather, what was useful for him was helping his father. In fact, he gave all his income to his father and, in turn, received an allowance as necessary.

Julio suggested that he had not encouraged his children to quit school, but that he had acquiesced in their lack of interest in school. He insisted, nevertheless, that he would not permit his younger children to drop out at an early age.

In Julio's case, he and his children assumed that they would continue to earn their living by farm work. The extent to which schooling is useful to them thus is determined by their cognitive orientation toward the world of their work and their future. In our interview, they frequently used the term "useful" in evaluating the relevance of schooling. It was a basic term for them, one

that unequivocally established their pragmatic assessment of the purpose of education.

In contrast to the families we have just described, we next consider Pedro and his wife, a Puerto Rican couple referred to earlier. Pedro saw schooling as a way of enhancing his children's occupational mobility. He proudly told us that his 18-year-old son, who had received a scholarship to attend college, understood the value of schooling. According to Pedro, his son wanted to "make his money easier." Even if he later worked in a factory, Pedro continued, he would get "an easy job because he has education." He contrasted his expectation for his son's future with the haphazard conditions under which he had supported his own family. Pedro and his wife hoped that their three younger children would seek occupations other than farm labor, but they had no illusions that they would advance in schooling as the oldest son had, for already each had evinced serious problems with schoolwork. In this connection, Pedro's wife told us about her two "wishes"--that her children would complete high school, and that she would recover from her prolonged illness sufficiently to help her family again.

Regarding her own future, she predicted that she would continue to be poor and to live a situation-centered life as she had in the past. Nonetheless, she was thankful that her husband always had a job, even though her family sometimes

had to depend on welfare checks. Both Pedro and his wife wanted their children to overcome the predictable difficulties by seeking other occupations.

Similarly, Felipe and Esperanza, the Mexican-American couple, whose family we met in the previous section, held the view that their three children should seek "better jobs." Felipe thought farm labor too strenuous to engage in for one's entire life and farm laborers too frequently exploited by farmers. Therefore, both of them wanted their children to find alternative careers. Given her children's good disposition toward schoolwork, Esperanza exhibited a degree of confidence in their ability to complete high school. In her opinion, they had the ability to go to college if only they could receive financial support. At any rate, her immediate concern was high school education, which most migrant children fail to complete.

In concluding this section, we emphasize that, though most farm workers' personal and social goals are defined within a framework of scarce resources and a situation-centered social context, their attitudes toward education do vary. Parents' cognitive orientation toward the world of work appears to influence their attitudes toward their children's education.

Parents' general concern was the extent to which their children could attain secondary education. The phenomenon of dropping out being widespread among their children, most

parents we interviewed considered high school education a primary challenge. Only in rare cases, did they consider college education for their children, a level of education they were hardly acquainted with. In fact, from the nearly fifty families interviewed only one child had gone to college.

Most parents had vague notions about their children's futures. Even when parents did not want their children to pursue their own careers as farm laborers, they rarely had alternative plans for them. True, some parents spoke of challenging professional careers for their children, but, by and large, their concern focused upon the present--the encounters with present problems in situation-centered contexts.

Who Become Farm Workers

Our review of the biographies of the young men and women we interviewed suggests three major sources of farm labor. Children who grow up in the conditions attributed to each of these sources are potential candidates for farm work.

First, Mexican and Puerto Rican peasantries constitute a source of young laborers for Garden County. These people are generally impoverished, unskilled, and underemployed. Young men of peasant families are often forced to leave their homes in search of work to supplement family income or

to earn their own livings. Thus, economic underdevelopment generates surplus labor, some of which is employed in the agricultural industry in the United States.

We met a group of such young men, recruited in Mexico, at a Garden County labor camp. They were highly motivated workers, all of whom were relatively underschooled because of poverty. Unable to support themselves at home, they struggled to come to Garden County. Many of them left their homes under circumstances similar to those of Tony, the young Mexican referred to in Chapter II. Born in a very poor peasant family struggling for subsistence, he dropped out of school at 15 to seek work. As he drifted and became a migrant worker in the United States, he assumed the obligation of supporting his mother and brother in Mexico, who could not live on their own meager income.

Second, the intergenerational continuity of farm work provides another important source of young labor. Various factors contribute to the generational succession of farm work seen largely among Mexican, Puerto Rican, and black families. Children born into migrant and seasonal farm families learn to engage in farm labor through various stages of socialization. They learn an occupational role model through their participation in farm work year after year. Particularly during the summer, older children are usually involved in picking tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, cabbages, peppers, and sometimes even lettuce along with

their parents, who provide them with proper guidance. These youngsters are willing to work because every effort of theirs produces income, no matter how small it might be. Also, these children's limited schooling, caused by the situational conditions affecting farm families, imposes a severe constraint upon their occupational alternatives. Dropping out of school forecloses possibilities of gaining access to relatively secure jobs that are not always subject to situational conditions. Further, their economic need to earn as early as possible, before they complete high school, leads them to assume full-time work. Farm work not requiring many trained skills, except in certain areas, physically mature adolescents can engage in it without difficulty. Still another variable contributing to intergenerational continuity is the failure of some migrant and seasonal parents to encourage their children to consider alternative careers. This is a function of their cognitive orientation toward the world of work, that results from their perception of the constraints imposed upon them in terms of access to resources and alternative work.

The generational succession of farm work may be viewed as a function of the junction among these variables leading to a pattern. For example, a large migrant family like Julio's expects children to contribute to the family income as early as they can. Limited family resources and the need for additional income lead children to terminate formal

education at an earlier age than normal in other societies. This imposes a constraint upon them in terms of their access to other occupational choices. Further, the situational conditions to which the family is constantly subjected render its life transient and present-centered. They prevent the family from developing long-range goals for the children. Children encounter problems and social conditions like those that constrained their parents. Such external forces, over which farm laborers have little control, are often presented to them cross-generationally. They account, to a significant extent, for the generational continuity of farm work, as has been the case for some of the families discussed in this chapter.

Third, the underemployment of youth in urban areas also leads young people, especially men, to engage in farm work. As pointed out elsewhere, it attracts underemployed and underschooled youth because it is readily accessible by those people who are willing to accept transient, low-paying jobs. Thus it is some youths from towns and cities in Garden County who are drawn into farm work. In addition, government contracts produce a large migration of Puerto Rican youth into Garden County every spring and summer.

In this section, we briefly discussed the socioeconomic and socializing environments that generate potential farm laborers. We identified three major sources: Mexican and

Puerto Rican peasantries, the intergenerational continuity of farm work, and the underemployment of youth.

To summarize this chapter: The situational conditions characteristic of the lives of people who earn a living from farm labor decisively influence their children's environments, socialization, and careers. It is exactly these conditions that contribute significantly to the development of their orientation toward education. The relatively low expectations held by farm workers about themselves and their children's educations and futures should most plausibly be viewed as a function of the infrastructure and social structure of their lives, over which they have little control. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that some farm workers strive to help their children develop alternative careers by encouraging them to acquire the prerequisite education.

CHAPTER IV

Migrant Children and Education

As noted in the earlier chapters, migrant families live in a particular social context determined by situational conditions, to which they are always subject in one way or another. These conditions affect not only their actions, but their entire motivational orientation. They also influence the cognitive framework that determines how they interpret their world and interact with it. These identical conditions contribute to their domination by present-time orientation, their lack of social and personal anchorages outside the family, and their relative lack of distant goals. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, we must remark, however, that these characteristics are not unique to farm workers; they are ubiquitous among the world's economically deprived and socially marginal.

Nor, indeed, can these characteristics fairly be attributed to all farm workers. For example, Roberto, whose profile we presented earlier, held the integrity of his family and his children's schooling paramount, and to preserve that integrity he was prepared to endure personal deprivation and marginality. In certain respects, he was not present-time oriented; dedication to his children

manifested the strength of his commitment to a distant goal. Likewise, other farm workers and their families exhibited differences that cannot be entirely reduced to a set of common attributes. Although such exceptions must be noted and respected, the abiding reality remains that common context of life that generates shared behavioral and attitudinal characteristics.

With respect to migrant children, their needs and characteristics, their problems and their education cannot be fully understood unless they are examined in relation to the social context that affects their enculturative process. In this chapter, we shall discuss the life experiences of migrant children, their relationship to schooling, and the attempts which have been made by educators to meet the special learning needs of this population.

The Migrant Child - A Challenge to Education

The extent to which an average boy or girl succeeds in an educational setting is influenced by a number of environmental conditions related to the family, the community, and the school. It is also dependent upon his health status, his emotional balance, and his social adjustment. In the latter area, involving transient children, several significant variables have been identified by the National Migrant Education Office (1981): They include general health, speech, vision, hearing, dental health, nutrition, responsiveness,, self-image, level of

aspiration, language and communication style, level of participation in school social events, leadership opportunities in the school social environment, range and content of social and emotional experiences, success reinforcement ratio in class, knowledge and understanding of existing migrant education services. These factors are, in turn, affected by the day-to-day activities of family members as they work and travel along the migrant stream.

The life for a migrant child is an obstacle course which he/she must conquer in order to survive. It is characterized by deprivation--socioeconomic, academic, cultural, emotional, and physiological; by discontinuity and by isolation from the mainstream community. These conditions literally predetermine their condemnation to a life of failures which begin in school and end eventually once again in the fields, to reenact the experiences of their parents. Before developing these points, however, we must acknowledge that generalizations about migratory children have limited validity. While they do describe accurately the majority of highly mobile youngsters, they are not readily applicable to former migrants who have taken permanent residence in a community, and sometimes even less appropriate to depict the sons and daughters of seasonal workers. In addition, individual differences among these boys and girls are significant and, as we learned from their teachers, and parents, override easy generalizations. It is

similarly true that some of the learning problems evidenced by transient children are also present among their nonmigrant peers who, likewise, do not constitute a homogeneous group. Having stated this caveat, we nonetheless intend to identify some of the most widespread traits which set aside from others those youngsters whose families are caught in the inexorable flow of the migrant streams--the real migrant children.

Several elements in the lives of those transients contribute to their inability to take advantage of the educational opportunities offered to them, which would enable them to break away from the circumstances surrounding their growing years; they include poverty,mobility, cultural capital, communication, and societal perceptions.

Poverty The annual income of a migrant worker is far below the poverty level. As noted in the records of the Farmworkers Corporation in Garden County, it seldom reaches more than $3,000 for unspecialized labor (other than lettuce or cabbage cutting, for example, which requires the skillful use of a dangerous tool - the machete). But these earnings are often eroded by the costs of travel, more often than not in unsafe vehicles, housing, and food, all of which are often subject to surplus charges made by greedy crew leaders.

These conditions work to the detriment of the children, both in terms of physical and psychological well being.

They live in quarters which, whether they are located on the farm or in nearby slums, are deplorably inadequate in size, quality, and sanitation. Prior to 1975, the department of labor in the state inspected these facilities regularly, (twice a month); in 1974, for instance, a total of 6,514 site visits had uncovered 20,881 violations of the standards prescribed for temporary labor camps by Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 (OSHA). Since then, the responsibility for verification of OSHA housing standards had been taken over by the federal government; the change has resulted in a drastic decrease in the frequency of inspections and a corresponding sharp decline in the maintenance of housing. Furthermore, a loophole in the law makes it possible for the landlords to run labor camps as they please without state or federal interference: to avoid inspection, all they need to do is claim that the facilities are used on a year-round basis. The presence of one single individual in residence for twelve months in a building consisting of any number of units is sufficient to validate this law.

On site observations in one of the better camps during the summers of 1980 and 1981 revealed such detrimental conditions as crowding, lack of ventilation, insufficient sleeping facilities, inadequate facilities for food storage and preparation, and insufficient as well as unsanitary conditions of common conveniences (one shower stall and two

open toilets for each sex, to serve 82 people in 20 units, none of which had private facilities for human waste disposal). Health hazards also abound in these locations: excessive heat due to the absence of shade and ventilation, aggravated by a flimsy, flat-roof construction; exposure to rain and cold from leaky roofs, doors and windows; lead paint and windblown dust laden with pesticides, often inhaled and ingested with food and drink, broken glass, rusty nails and pieces of machinery laying around the yard; rats, snakes, insects and other "kantsees" attracted by partially buried garbage; and inadequate emergency provisions such as one pay phone.

In such circumstances, children have no place to study and no opportunity to concentrate on homework without constant interruptions. Furthermore, their sleep, on makeshift pallets laid on the floor or sometimes on the bare floor itself, is constantly disturbed by camp noises, including adult quarrels, fights and laughter, snores, nightmare screams, by insect bites, by hunger pangs, and by weather conditions (heat, cold, or rain). Repeated sleep deprivation undermines the youngsters' thought processes, their capacity for attention, and their stamina to become involved in class activities the next day.

Poverty, associated with seasonal employment, results also in malnutrition and health problems for children, due to insufficient food during lay-off periods, imbalanced diet

stressing the expediency of quick-energy sodas over nutritious whole milk, and neglect of chronic, nonemergency conditions such as dental care, skin irritations, or ear and eye infections. At worst, nutritional deprivation in vitro, during the last three months of pregnancy produces mental retardation. At best, it causes anemia and an increased susceptibility to diseases, which later on plague the child for the rest of his life. According to Sarah Dougherty, the state health specialist responsible for Garden County services, health-related problems account for a good portion of the scholastic difficulties experienced by a migrant child, for they produce listlessness, anxiety, a short attention span, and visual or hearing loss. In 1977, for example, some 1500 boys and girls were enrolled in the Garden County school health services; one third of them had to be referred to eye clinics and ophthalmologists for treatment, and over 16 percent were diagnosed as suffering from serious disorders (School Health Services Report, 1977). The seriousness of visual defects in children of school age should be particularly stressed for, in our literate society, knowledge is acquired predominantly by sight, and nearly 85 percent of classroom learning is visual in nature.

Economic restrictions among migratory farmworkers affect their children in other ways as well: all too often, the specter of hunger forces parents to resort to child

labor. Prior to 1974, no minimum age control was placed on "nonhazardous" agricultural work outside of school hours. That year, a 12-year-age limit was enforced by the Fair Labor Standards Act Amendment; unfortunately, it was rendered all but ineffectual by the exceptions included in its provisions, one of which permitted any child to work in the fields as long as he did so in company of his parents. A 1977 amendment lowered the age of "labor" to 10, for chronological periods starting June 1 and ending October 15. In reality, however, the average migrant child is expected to assume his share of family responsibilities as soon as he is able to do so; accordingly, he is often an accomplished bean or strawberry picker by the time he is six, and an expert baby nurse at seven. The fact that working children are illegally absent from school is ignored by the farmer, whose sole interest is to harvest his crop as soon as possible, before it is ruined by inclement weather, and by the parents whose primary concern is to insure family survival.

In one particular interview, Servandina, a former migrant then in the process of completing her second law degree, recalled the heartbreaking experiences of her childhood:

> My parents thought I was asleep, but I wasn't, it was too hot. I could hear them whispering and I could hear my name. Then, I knew what the next day would bring and I would cry, quietly, so that they couldn't hear me. I had seen the telltale signs that evening--the little food on the table,

> the frown on my father's face, the worry in my mother's eyes. I was the eldest of five children, and thirteen at that time....
>
> In the morning, after my father had left for the field, my mother would put her arms around me and say: "Dina, I hate to ask, and I wouldn't do it if I could. But, would you mind not going to school today...we need you in the field. If we all work very hard all day today till it gets dark, maybe tomorrow, everything will be OK."
>
> I would nod and follow her to the field. What else could I do? And what else could she do? But I hated it. I knew that times were bad, and tomorrow would be no better...I would be missing school again..., and again..., and again. And I swore to myself that I would get out of this miserable life. It is that memory that keeps me going today. I had made up my mind to get away from the fields, so I studied whenever I could, and I read everything I could lay my hands on. I borrowed, begged and actually stole books. But it wasn't easy. It was tough, but I made it; I am the only one in the family who made it.
>
> My parents, my brothers and sisters, they are still following the stream. When I see them, we have nothing to say to each other. They are happy for me, but they don't understand me, and I don't understand them. We have become strangers.

Actually, Servandina was exception in that she had pursued her intellectual interests in spite of the negative circumstances which surrounded her. She did not model her behavior after that of her parents, as most children are wont to do; and, somehow, she had managed to conquer the handicap of her lack of cognitive skills relevant to academic pursuits. Despite their extensive traveling, migrant youngsters do not translate these concrete experiences into an appropriate conceptual frame of reference. Their itinerant life, for instance, does not

provide them with a sense of geographical location. In one class, for instance, several boys actually asked where the Philadelphia Museum was. Yet, all of them had actually passed through the city on their way to Garden County; Philadelphia was just a name to them. They have little access to what the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls "cultural capital (1975)." By that term, Bourdieu refers to the totality of symbols, knowledge, and skills available in society. For example, Dina and her peers enjoyed little exposure to social resources, including books, cultural symbols, movies, games requiring symbolic manipulation, and even shopping malls and toys. In the same vein, teachers often cite the absence of such objects as magazines, newspapers and pictures in the homes as a handicap to education.

In this connection, recall Chico, Francisco's ten-year-old son, a victim of the deprivation described here. As he moved with his family from one place to another, he had no book, no paper, and not even a pencil to take along with him. One temporary home after another contained neither newspapers nor magazines. A single TV set was the sole source of information for the family. And even here, the medium failed to provide intellectual stimulation; as one teacher remarked: "I know the TV set is always on and the kids watch it for hours on end. But somehow, the whole message passes over their heads; it's as if they listened to

noise and saw moving images without associating meaning with them. Television is not a source of knowledge for them; it's entertainment, but I don't know what kind."

The majority of transient children do not usually possess the type of determination and resourcefulness demonstrated by Servandina. As a rule, they tend to be molded from babyhood in the common pattern of fatalistic forbearance which characterizes their parents' response to the nonnegotiable external conditions controlling their very existence. Early in life, they learn the futility of asking for anything or crying when they are hungry or hurt; later on in school, they soon fall into the habit of not volunteering any information in order to avoid being noticed by the teacher or their peers to the point of even omitting their names from their seatwork papers. Few of those youngsters ever become rebels; they are so quiet on school grounds, for the short period of time that they remain in the district, that they are easily neglected and they would be totally overlooked, were it not for the grim reality of their academic retardation.

By the time they reach sixteen, they are ready to turn their backs unhesitatingly on the institutions which have so ill served them, and to return full time to the fields where they at least receive a tangible reward, meager though it may be, for their efforts. These facts were highlighted in a study of factors influencing migrant students to drop out

of school (Nelken and Gallo, 1978). The major reasons given by youngsters for their decision to leave school were: family need, major family problems, dislike of teachers and classes, and social attraction. The national statistics related to this phenomenon speak eloquently for themselves: 85 percent of migrant teenagers drop out of school when they reach the legal age limit (Research Triangle Study, 1981).

Mobility Life on the move results in isolation from the general community. Social interaction outside of labor camps and fields are often restricted to brief contacts with mainstream members in such locations as stores, gas stations, hospitals or clinics, service organization offices, churches, bars, diners' backdoors, police stations, and jails. Schools are, in fact, the very first permanent institution with which migrant children have direct and prolonged contact.

From the first to the twelfth grade, educational programs are organized on the basis of continuity, and are complemented with materials which present knowledge in structured sequences. In order to be effective, therefore, schooling demands uninterrupted attendance for a ten-month duration, with makeup work available as needed during extra summer sessions.

These participation requirements cannot be met by migratory students, who are unable to remain in a permanent location for a lengthy period of time. A child who spends 4

to 6 months away from home base, as he accompanies his parents' trek along one of the streams, may attend as many as five to six different schools during that period. It has been estimated that he misses as much as one third of an academic year in consequence of these transfers (ERIC Fact Sheet 04, 1980). For such a boy or girl, discontinuity is a way of life, characterized by constant readjustments to new circumstances, and by irregularity in prescribed class attendance. For weeks on end, he may see no one but family members and other workers; then, suddenly, he finds himself back in school, thrown into contact with "outsiders."

In terms of education, transiency results in irreparable losses of essential knowledge, stunted conceptual maturation, deficient learning skills development, and retarded academic growth. The very act of moving from one district to another automatically exposes the student to the confusion of missing or repetitious information, the trauma of reiterated testing for grade placement, the embarrassment of grade or program misassignment, and the stress of adapting to new teachers and peers, instructional techniques and materials, systems of operation and school requirements. He has no opportunity to come to terms with the institution--to find his way around the building, to form ties with some of the staff, to make friends, or to internalize the regular daily routine of the academic world--before it is time for him to move on,

only to start the same disrupted cycle of adjustment all over again elsewhere.

As one mother states: "The only thing I feel sorry is for the kids, because they move around so much. Little kids need one place they could call home. When you love kids, you have to stay on, so the kids could have the security of a home. I mean that's my opinion, you know." Her statement highlights a common problem that migrant children periodically encounter. "The security of a home" of which she spoke includes the continuity of experience and personal anchorages, or identities, that children have to establish among their peers. When these ongoing processes are disrupted children cannot easily maintain a positive motivational orientation toward their academic work.

From the standpoint of migrant parents, it is to this very factor of mobility that the academic retardation of their children must be attributed primarily, rather than to inadequacies on the part of the schools themselves or their staffs. One migrant mother, for instance, ascribed her daughter's reading difficulties to the fact that "Alva had missed her phonics" at one point and, consequently, had never been able to "catch up with her schoolwork ever since." However, she also added that teachers had not helped much, admitting that "they don't really know much about our children!"

Presumably, the basic skills information now entered on each learner's record in the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) should remedy to some extent this problem of educational discontinuities, once the system is fully operational on demand, at least in those locations where supplementary migrant personnel is available to provide individual attention to the migrant leaders. This system will be explored later.

Paucity of Cultural Capital Migrant children are earmarked for scholastic failure from the very day they are born, by virtue of their identity as members of minority, disadvantaged groups. Since agricultural or fishing labor neither requires any particular physical skills or knowledge, nor necessitates fluency in English, it is apt to attract rural immigrants, marginal individuals unfit for other work, and illegal aliens. As noted in the Research Triangle Study (1981), the demographic profile of the migrant population in this country consists of Hispanics, blacks, and whites and others (such as Filipinos, Haitians, Vietnamese, and other recent refugees) who respectively constitute 70, 13 and 17 percent of the total. From one year to the next, however, the ethnic composition of the streams changes according to prevailing circumstances. Until the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, the Eastern stream was predominantly black; then, it became primarily Puerto Rican when blacks began to settle in the north, and

campesinos flooded the mainland in search of work. Today, the trend is again shifting toward the latest immigrant groups (Vietnamese and Haitians, for instance) and especially illegal Mexicans, in answer to the rejection of contract laborers by farmers who see fixed wages and worker benefits as an economic imposition leading to reduced profits for them, through "unnecessary" increases in production costs. These new workers tend to travel with their families, and their offsprings should be in school; instead, they work in the fields to avoid detection by immigration inspectors. What this new situation means in terms of education is that the recruitment task of the state departments is likely to become increasingly more arduous and less rewarding in the future, thus resulting in a rising number of unidentified children proportioned to the incidence of illegal entries from the southern border.

Incompatibility between the school environment, predominantly reflective of middle class culture, and the behavioral patterns and experiences of minority children has been explored in scholarly literature and substantiated in educational statistics. In the case of migratory children, particularly, the already negative conditions of nonmainstream ethnicity and low socioeconomic status are hopelessly aggravated by mobility and social isolation, thus resulting in a unique culture so alien to the dominant

society that it actually insulates its members against the impact of school learning experiences.

Very little in the academic world makes sense to the migrant student--whether it be the expectations of teachers, the administrative policies and regulations, the instructional strategies, the curriculum content, the orderly scheduling of activities, the behavior of other peers, and even the language. And, conversely, the transient child's modus operandi is incomprehensible to everyone. One art teacher in Garden County kept a diary of those incidents which took place in his first migrant class two summers ago. Among the most significant revelations disclosed by the document were repeated references to the youngsters' potential for violence:

> ...there is such violence in all of them, just waiting for the right moment to be unleashed. It explodes when you least expect it. One of them threw a rock at a car outside the museum yesterday. And today, Carita took off after Alberto with a pair of scissors...I don't know why! Nobody would say. When I questioned them, they just huddled in a group, looking at me with those blank eyes. I felt it was them against me! And, this time, I was the stranger, the minority...not them.

Indeed, the children of the road are no strangers to violence; they lead stormy lives in the company of adults who routinely punish them with a blow, argue with their fists, and resort to murderous weapons to solve a disagreement. To such youngsters, then, the concepts of rules, reasoned discipline and third party arbitration in

disputes are as foreign as their own forceful settlements of arguments is to the law-abiding teacher.

Another anomalous behavior noted in the art teacher's journal concerned the students':

> ...total disregard for those who will use the classroom after them. When they leave the room, it looks as if a cyclone has hit it: papers thrown everywhere, paint spilled on the tables, pencils and chalk crushed under foot...I have told them a hundred times that they must leave everything in order. I might as well have talked in Greek for all the good it did. They just won't pick up after themselves; they just don't care.

And where could these boys and girls have learned the meaning of ownership, care and responsibility? They have only known broken down shacks, rickety furniture, secondhand clothing and even torn books in school--left in disrepair by their previous owners or occupants. They have had no bed, no toy, no home, no possession, and no place which they could call their own! As for the kind of knowledge they have accumulated in the course of their travels--the crops, the fields, the roads, car maintenance--it is of little interest or significance to the school. As reported in matter-of-fact fashion by the "phonics-deprived" teenager, Alva:

> The first thing I learned in class was to shut up, except when the teachers asked you a question. The teachers, they don't want to hear nothing from you about where you've been and what you've done. And that don't mean nothing to the other kids either....

For Alva and most of her peers, the school was simply one more imposition from the external environment, to be endured stoically until the magic age of sixteen when one could leave. Working in the fields, when economic constraints rendered it necessary, was apparently a welcome release for all but the exceptional from a jail-like sentence. In this respect, the teenagers' view of school as a waste of time tended to coincide with that of many educators who, because they were neither cognizant of, nor attuned to migrant culture and problems, were convinced of the futility of attempting to cope with a situation they knew as only temporary. Such negative attitudes are further reinforced by public prejudices against minorities in general, and migrants in particular, whose presence is tolerated by the agrarian community only as long as the fields are in need of their attention. What renders the situation all the more hopeless is the fact that, although migrant parents do perceive education almost unanimously as something desirable, they are also all only too realistically aware that it is a goal nearly impossible for their children to attain, given their life circumstances. And so, the status quo of school-home segregation continues to be perpetuated ad infinitum with the unspoken consent of everyone.

Communication Children in the migrant streams labor under a dual communication handicap. In the first place,

most of them have grown up speaking a native language (Spanish or other) or a dialect other than standard English. Their initial introduction to the mainstream idiom occurs usually at the first grade level or, sometimes, when they are lucky enough to be identified by an alert recruiter, in a pre-school program. Their linguistic divergence entitles them to bilingual or English-as-a-Second-Language instruction wherever such educational offerings are available in a district but, of course, subject to the availability of "slots" after all of the "regular" students have been enrolled in these programs.

The academic problems encountered by those who are taught in a language other than their own need not be belabored at this point, for they have been amply substantiated in the various court cases which followed the landmark Lau decision in 1974.

Limited English knowledge is often diagnosed mistakenly by educators as a symptom of "mental retardation" or "communication impairment" and results in misassignment to special or remedial programs which do not meet the learners' need for English-as-a-Second-Language instruction. In the case of migrant children, however, these difficulties are further compounded by other existing verbal limitations. The communication style of migrant workers is characterized by a conceptual and lexical narrowness of range which the sociologist Basil Bernstein once described as a "restricted

code" of expression (1977). His concept of codes refers to the social structuring of meanings through the use of spoken language, and he defines two types of codes: restricted, and elaborated. The former orients speech to highly particularistic meanings tied to a specific context. The speech cannot be understood independently of the context, which is assumed to be known by the listener, nor can the context be comprehended except by those who share the speaker's background. This restricted speech depends on the hypothesis that the speaker and the listener have common assumptions, interests, and histories. Sentences are, therefore, usually short and often incomplete; the meanings to be transmitted are implicit, not articulated. In contrast, elaborated codes are more independent of context, and they generate universal meanings that do not require the interlocutors to share premises and attitudes. The meanings are made explicit, elaborated, and independent of context through the careful structuring of speech at the grammatical and lexical levels. Sentences exploit a rich vocabulary and are elaborated and complex; they conform to grammatical rules.

Migrant and seasonal children are socialized into restricted codes, as many lower-class children are. Their parents driven by the necessity of survival, are forced to devote all of their energies to the business of making a living; stumbling home exhausted after a grueling fourteen-

hour day, they neither have the strength, nor the time, nor even the desire to converse with their offsprings--to answer their questions at length, to tell stories to them, to explain how things work, or even to reason out for them the differences between right and wrong. Interactions between adults and their offsprings, therefore, tends to be terse, and concerned primarily with nonnegotiable commands which permit no contradiction and are intended to facilitate adult life. Unquestioned obedience is the rule in migrant homes, and non-conformity to these "do's and don'ts" brings inevitably swift, physical sanctions without the luxury of any explanation.

Thus raised in a laconic, action-oriented environment, a boy or girl plunged suddenly into the verbally flooded context of the classroom feels estranged: he/she not only lacks the words, but also the habits of communication, for he/she possesses neither the experiential information indispensable for scholastic survival, nor the skills needed to collect it, comprehend it or utilize it in classroom exchanges. Frequently, these youngsters have an impoverished vocabulary and are incapable of producing a sequential set of sentences to recount a story or describe some scene or object. Given these linguistic handicaps, they have a comparatively poor ability to describe events in their own lives or to express personal thoughts. They are not even able to express adequately their needs, feelings,

hopes, fears, joys and sorrows.

Pronunciation, too, as it is exemplified in the migrant camps and at home tends to deviate from what is considered "standard." When transferred into the classroom, such speech disparities may interfere with the child's attempt to associate sounds with written symbols, thereby delaying his acquisition of reading skills. If great enough, they may even cause him to be misunderstood by teachers and other pupils.

Whether these speech disparities are reflected in pronunciation problems vocabulary limitations, grammatical deficiencies, or poverty of expression, the language habits migrant children have acquired in their environment affect detrimentally their interaction in the classroom. In one particular school, a teacher described the case of a first-grader of English-speaking migrants. The child apparently had the ability to understand oral language and to follow directions but, as she approached the end of the school year, she had still not uttered a single word in class.

Educators seldom realize the extent of the communication breakdown which separates migrant students from themselves and their peers and which impedes their adaptation to the academic environment. Nor do they perceive fully the depth of intellectual deprivation which renders school learning such an arduous, alien task for even the brightest youngsters. But, even if they recognized the

crippling absence of educationally relevant experiences in their charges, any remedial strategy they might devise would likely be ineffectual, for it would be inevitably grounded in the very elements which are the tools of their profession and the downfall of the migrant learner--words and ideas.

Societal Perceptions The attitudes of children toward education, and their general orientation toward the world conform to those exemplified by their parents. Those found in the migrant community are apt to be dysfunctional in terms of academic receptivity, since the average adult in a camp has seldom gone beyond sixth grade, and tends to view schooling as an unavoidable societal prescription for boys and girls which is no longer of any direct concern to him. Once they have enrolled their offsprings in a district, parents feel that they have discharged their responsibility with respect to education; the rest is in the hands of the teachers and the children. Thus, the latter are left strictly on their own to survive or fail in the academic environment.

From the standpoint of the schools, parental noninvolvement and the alienation of the child's background from that expected or the student population brings endless frustrations with which teachers are unable to cope. These academic institutions are designed to meet the learning needs of youngsters who possess the "right" characteristics mandated by the dominant, middle-class society--future

orientation, task-directiveness, competitiveness and above all, assurance in self-esteem. From the moment the migrant child sets foot in class, he runs afoul of those expectations, having been taught all his life the values of living from day to day, securing immediate rewards, and avoiding unnecessary struggles. Whatever positive self-concept he brings to school is soon undermined by his failure to succeed in the academic environment, by the absence of support he finds at home, and by the lack of encouragement he receives from his teachers. As years go by, the migrant student becomes convinced of his "worthlessness" in the eyes of the outside community; eventually, he is overcome by the hopelessness of the situation, and falls into a state of apathy toward schooling in general, and teachers in particular. Henceforth, he is turned off by the only thing that could help him escape from the migrant stream--education. This listless attitude is further reinforced by three other factors: first, the absence of academic incentives in the home, which ranks such pursuits below the need to make a living; second, the sense of not belonging "out there," fostered by constant travel and isolation from stable communities; and third, the renewed stress of adjusting to new faces and new demands in each stopover district. From that time on, the fate of the child is sealed and he follows in the footsteps of his parents, to lead the only life he knows and understands in

the field and on the road. For the remainder of his school days, he will slip silently, guardedly through the classrooms and the hallways, still rebelling at times, but mostly seeking to remain anonymous by conforming outwardly to teacher expectations. Only on his own ground--the camp, the fields, the roads--does he let go of his tight control and return to his true self--a basically gregarious child, who will talk anyone's ears off if he is given one ounce of attention.

This duality in the personality of migratory youngsters resulting from enforced survival in two worlds, those of "home" and school, had already been noted by Robert Coles (1971) when he had conducted his study of itinerant families in the 1960's, and had been reported by him at the annual conference of the American Psychiatric Association in 1965. Today, these findings are still valid, as the Garden County fieldwork has revealed. In terms of education, they point to the deleterious effect of traditional school settings on migratory boys and girls, but they also indicate as well one important and often overlooked fact--that the hard life led by these children does endow them with an irrepressible core of inner strength which can only be subdued momentarily, but not eradicated, by the destructive experiences of repeated academic failure.

To know such children, one must meet them on their own territory for, outside they automatically assume the

protective nondescript coloring which shields them from a world they do not understand and have learned to fear. In order to reach them, educators have to leave the security of their orderly universe and venture into the alien realm of labor camps, a radical departure from the well-worn grooves of academe which, at present, no one appears willing to undertake. They also need to become closely associated with migrant parents, once again outside of a traditional setting, in order to enlist their support for their children's efforts. One particular project conducted by the New York State University in Geneseo, New York, did reach out to the parents and confirmed the positive effect of parental behavioral modification on their offsprings' academic performance (1970). At the end of a mere six-week experimental adult psychological orientation program, which had been made possible by providing stipends and transportation for the participants, the latters' children were tested and demonstrated significant gains on the Metropolitan Achievement test. Parental involvement does present problems in migrant education, given the nature of seasonal work but its rewards are so worthwhile that to neglect it would be nothing short of educationally criminal.

Coping With Problems

Like their parents, migrant children are ruled by external conditions from the very first day they are born.

The uncertainty of the family income destines them to suffer from malnutrition, with its attendant physiological and psychological problems; and the nature of adult employment. Seasonal work on farms and in fisheries dictates that they reside in a crowded environment rife with health hazards. Living in an encapsulated world isolated from mainstream society, they are deprived of the variety of experiences and success models which normally prepares children for school and stimulates them to absorb academic learning. The fact that this "world" remains in motion, following the crops, condemns them to a perpetual round of unrelated schooling exposures which ordains their academic retardation and, ultimately, throws them back into the migrant stream.

Traveling has taught them the wisdom of concentrating their energy on the tasks at hand, one day at a time; but this present orientation renders them powerless to conceptualize the distant rewards of an academic preparation which would open for them new vistas of employment. For this same reason, delayed gratification, such as a passing grade at the end of a marking period, has little meaning for them, for tomorrow or the next week will see them heading for another school, and they will not be around to reap the benefit of their work. They would rather see an immediate reward for their efforts, no matter how small: a bright ribbon, a piece of candy, a pencil, or something tangible they can hold in their hand, even for a moment. They

delight in such tokens of approval for, even in homes that are emotionally supportive, these boys and girls have rarely had any possessions of their own. The small gifts donated by a teacher or staff member may be the youngster's first experience of exclusive ownership and, as such, it is immeasurably precious.

Transiency also takes away from migrant children the joys of enduring friendship and the pleasure of establishing a lasting rapport with a favorite teacher. Indeed, schools and their staffs are seldom recalled by name; what is remembered about a time of year or a particular area is the keystone of migrant existence--the crop! Queried about his past school activities, a youngster will say: "Oh yes, the spinach, that's when (or where) I had that wonderful math teacher."

With a few notable exceptions--those who are sufficiently adaptable and relatively resilient, such as Esperanza's children, referred to earlier, migrant boys and girls suffer from the absence of a personal anchorage. Deprived of meaningful interactions with their peers, they especially need the reassurance of adults, and they seek it from their teacher and from any adult who shows interest in them. In particular, those in the early grades hunger for special attention, and depend on their teachers to an unusually high degree. They are anxious to please them, to win that expressive support they crave. Hugs, squeezes, and

hair-ruffling are their rewards and their motives. They need, even more than nonmigrant children, to be touched and spoken to affectionately, to be loved and approved of, in short, to be recognized and accepted.

The transient child's need for expressive support from his teachers is reinforced by its frequent absence from their homes. Parents just returned from long hours of strenuous work in the fields are often too exhausted to give their offsprings the attention they require. But neglect is not the worst parental failure; in some homes, children have witnessed anger and violence and have, themselves suffered physical assault. Some of these youngsters come to school with black and blue marks on their arms and legs, or other evidence of abuse, and live in constant terror of being beaten. Their dread of similar treatment from other adults makes them shrink away at first from their teachers or anyone who approaches them to give reassurance or assistance to them. In such cases, fear destroys the child's access to social support and further isolates him from the school community.

In seeming contradiction to their emotional dependency, is the migrant children's ability to assume responsibility at a very young age. This capability is fostered by the parents who treat the family as an economic unit devoted to the survival of the group. Seven-year-olds are often left alone in the camp to care for younger siblings, or brought

to the fields to do their share of the crop harvest. Accordingly, these boys and girls learn at a tender age how to do the things necessary to cope with the concrete problems and realities of situation-centered life. One teacher remarked that migrant children "seem to know more about the world" than do their nonmigrant peers. Yet, they acquire this knowledge and independence and responsibility at the expense of their emotional and intellectual developments. Worse still, their unique abilities often go unrecognized and unused in school. When scant attention is paid to the abilities that mark the uniqueness and value of these children as individuals, they are likely to develop little self-confidence. When their performances win neither compliments nor encouragement, they naturally acquire little ability to compete with children whose talents have been recognized and encouraged.

Socialization into the culture of the road effectively programs children for academic failure and for recycling into the migrant stream. This is virtually an inescapable fate, except for the very few outstanding individuals who manage to break away by sheer will power from the damning cycle of mobility, marginality and isolation associated with seasonal employment on the docks and the farms; it is prescribed by the nature of migrant existence: its erratic work patterns, harsh living conditions, straitened social relations, wretched income, limited participation in social

institutions, and restricted access to social resources. As a result of these conditions, migrant youths have no choice but to reenact the drama of their parents' existence and, in turn, set its stage for their own children: dropping out of school with unexpanded intellectual horizons, they only have a limited cultural capital to bestow on these offsprings and, perforce, subject them to the same alienating life style which had held them in bondage. Such is the tragedy of migrancy that it feeds upon itself and, in the process, perpetuates itself.

In such environment, individual options are all but nonexistent, and a child's first priority is to acquire those skills that will help him cope with the situation and survive its circumstances. All else is secondary. The cycle of migrant life, thus, exists in perpetuity, for its stark reality constitutes the very context that determines the quality of a youngster's experiences and sets forever the course of his life.

We proceed now to several individual cases that may illustrate the problems with which migrant children have to cope. The first case involves Gabriel, an 11-year-old Puerto Rican boy whose unfortunate history is not rare enough among migrant children.

In November 1980, Gabriel enrolled in Miss Fisher's special education class that included three other emotionally disturbed children. When his aunt brought him

to class for the first time, he stood at the entrance suspiciously inspecting the surroundings. When Miss Fisher invited him to enter, he swaggered to her desk with his hands in his pockets and looked at the other children. Immediately he announced that he was not staying in "a place full of nigger babies," but he took a seat with them. Though Miss Fisher was surprised and even shocked by his attitude, she decided to allow him to express his feelings and to observe him for a while. The next day, he ran around the room throwing things on the floor and yelling, using every curse word he could think of. He was tall for his age, callous, angry, frightened, dirty, and foul-mouthed. Everyone looked at him when one black girl said "If I said what you did, my father would hit me."

Gabriel's behavior those first two days motivated Miss Fisher to look closely into his background. His file obtained from the Migrant Student Record Transfer System, a national system that supplies information on migrant children, revealed relevant facts contributing to his behavior. His mother had abandoned him and his three siblings when he was younger, and his father was killed in a fight a few years later. He was subsequently placed in custody of relatives, who passed him from one family to another. His record revealed sporadic schooling, for he had sometimes failed to attend school and ran away whenever he could. He preferred to stay in the fields. His truancies

prompted a few attempts to bring him back to school, though his adjustment to the school environment appeared to have been a complete failure.

A few weeks after he entered Miss Fisher's class, Gabriel made repeated self-reassuring references to his father: "My father loves me. He is away now, but he will be back to get me from this stinking place." Miss Fisher gradually noticed that his father's death obsessed Gabriel, but every time she mentioned his father, it disturbed him so deeply that he cursed, screamed, and rolled on the floor. One time he ran away and hid somewhere in the school building. After three months Miss Fisher had made little progress with him, although he had begun to get along with the other children under "a sort of armed truce," in Miss Fisher's phrase. He just wanted to be left alone and did not wish to be touched by anyone, including Miss Fisher. He displayed a temper tantrum if someone did not address him correctly. As Miss Fisher put it, "His behavior was typically macho." But beneath his behavior she detected deep feelings of fear and distrust of people.

Nevertheless, an unusual event occurred as Miss Fisher's children completed their Easter project. They made colorful baskets that they filled with the candies and inexpensive gifts she had bought for them. She taught them how to make cards. Having completed the project in two days, they affixed cards bearing each child's name to the

baskets and distributed them. Though Gabriel had participated in the project, Miss Fisher was entirely unprepared for the smile of pure delight that spread over his face when he received his basket. The class had never seen him react like that before. For the first time he displayed a sense of shared experience and appreciation at having his very own basket. Miss Fisher felt that the thick wall that had obstructed communication was finally being breached, and that she might have an opportunity to understand him better. This event had occurred only two weeks before Gabriel was to leave school and move elsewhere.

Gabriel refused to take the basket home; he insisted, "They'll take it away." Every day at school, his behavior showed how much he cherished it. He took all the things out of the basket and counted them. When he was satisfied with their number and order, he repacked them and hid the basket. He never ate the candies. Though the other children knew where he hid the basket, they never touched it. They appeared to sense that Gabriel had a special feeling about his possession that he wanted to keep inviolate.

One afternoon prior to his departure, Gabriel refused to do anything but occupy himself with the basket. At the end of the day, he remained until the other children had left the classroom. Then he approached Miss Fisher and handed her his basket still intact. "For you," he said sadly. When she reached for him, he went into her arms and

started to cry. His big, wrenching sobs shook both their bodies. She held him firmly, not saying anything, and he whispered to her: "I want to be dead like my father. Nobody likes me. I have nobody. My father is dead. I want to be dead, too." This was the first time he had admitted that his father was dead. It was to be the last time, too, for he never returned.

This second case lets us observe how a migrant child was treated by school personnel. It involves the family of Juan, a 17-year-old mentally retarded Puerto Rican boy. His father was a migrant crew leader who had worked in Garden County for some years. He had seven children, two of whom were said to be mentally retarded.

Our primary interest in this family, however, is Juan. When his family moved to Garden County in 1979, he was placed in a regular English-speaking class at the eighth grade level, although he could not speak English. (Located in the heart of Garden County, that school regularly accommodates a number of migrant children and offers special programs for them). He had sat in class for a few months without learning anything at all. Then, realizing that he had been misassigned, his teacher enrolled him in the bilingual class. Still he made no progress in his academic work. For three months after his admission to the school no one had even thought of testing him to find out if he had any learning disability. Finally, however, the bilingual

teacher decided to refer him to the child-study team in her district, which identified him as mentally retarded.

Strangely, Juan was placed in a special education program which was an English-speaking class for retarded youngsters. His woes were still not over because he was "mainstreamed," along with his English-speaking peers, for art and physical education classes.

Thus it was that Juan attended his first physical education class nearly four months after he had been admitted to the school. Because he was comparatively big, the gym teacher told him to get some of the tumbling mats from the closet. Unfortunately, because Juan could not understand what the teacher had told him to do, he just stood and smiled uncomfortably. He again failed to respond when the teacher repeated his order sharply. Now incensed by Juan's failure, the teacher yelled at him, grabbed him by the front of the shirt, and shook him angrily. Frightened, Juan pushed the teacher away, causing him to fall. Alarmed and upset, he ran away.

Livid now, the teacher rushed into his office and called the police. Claiming that he had been attacked, he demanded that Juan be immediately arrested. Unfortunately, there were no objective witnesses to this incident except the other students, who were, incidentally, asked not to talk about it. Subsequently, the police did arrest Juan and put him in jail. When Juan failed to return home, his

parents looked for him all evening. His father could not conceive of going to the school to inquire, for he felt no one would listen to him there. As he said in Spanish, "My English is not good, and I am a migrant. I am nothing to them." Did he consider reporting to the police that his son was missing? His reaction was expressed in the following words: "No police. They hate us. They don't help. They give problems."

Apparently one of the students in the physical education class reported Juan's arrest to the home-school liaison late that night. Upon learning of the incident, he drove to Juan's home to inform his father, whereupon they went to the police station, where Juan was released into his father's custody. It became obvious that neither school nor police had attempted to contact Juan's family, though to do so would not have been difficult.

Deeply distressed at the school's treatment of Juan, his family decided to let him spend the remaining months of the academic year with relatives elsewhere in the county. His father reported to the school that Juan had left the state. He attempted neither to inquire into the incident nor to redress the case against Juan. Partly he was afraid of antagonizing the school personnel, even the gym teacher, lest that work against his other children attending that school. All he could do was to acquiesce in the judgments of the school and police by discontinuing his son's

schooling. But he continued to believe that Juan did not harm the teacher. He sadly commented: "Juan is a good boy, a good boy. He did not want to hurt the teacher. The teacher scared him. He did not know what was happening." Juan's father felt insulted and ignored by the school, but he could not fight back, partly because he was "nothing to them"--his unnegotiable world.

The third case involves Carmen, a 15-year-old migrant student at a junior high school. Since she had transferred to the school three months previously, she had always been withdrawn and rarely spoke, in either English or Spanish, in her classes or even outside the classroom. Yet she apparently understood English relatively well and managed to do some of her homework. Although she was reticent and unresponsive, boys attempted to attract her attention because she was pretty and rather well-dressed. She was not interested, however, and did not speak to them. Carmen kept a distance between herself and her classmates, and she occasionally walked clumsily, as if in a dream. Her teachers believed she was having a hard time adjusting to her new environment.

As Mrs. Ross, who was in charge of migrant education at the school, learned about Carmen's behavior, she decided to visit her mother to inquire about her problem. One day when Carmen went home, Mrs. Ross went with her. Her home was a labor camp consisting of a dozen dismal living quarters--a

typical migrant workers' barracks without private toilets or running water. Fortunately, a heavy rain had kept Carmen's mother home that day, and Mrs. Ross related her observations of Carmen's behavior. The mother's reaction was unreflective, and impulsive, and even stunning: "I'll beat her. She is a bad girl. I take care." As her mother displayed unreserved anger at her, Carmen said nothing as usual and stood in a corner of the kitchen. Her mother quickly approached Carmen and started to strike her with her hands. Momentarily at a loss in the midst of this evolving situation, Mrs. Ross quickly recovered and began to talk to the mother to divert her attention. Realizing that her visit had been ill-advised, she left the camp as soon as she could.

Deeply disturbed at the event, Mrs. Ross approached the liaison the following day for advice. He was already aware that Carmen's mother had used physical violence against her in the past. According to his account, the mother lived with a man much younger than she and always resented her daughter's presence when he paid attention to her. Carmen's defense was to retreat into silence, whenever possible, to avoid her mother's aggression. Apparently, Carmen's mother considered Mrs. Ross's visit a challenge. Carmen failed to attend school the next two days, but returned on the third day. Mrs. Ross noticed that, although she was neatly dressed and pretty as before, she was limping and did not

eat lunch. Her appearance being a little unusual, she took her to the nurse's office. The nurse discovered that Carmen had black and blue marks on her back and upper legs. But Carmen refused to tell her how she got those marks and why she would not eat. Puzzled by Carmen's injuries, the nurse decided to refer her to a doctor the following day. According to the doctor, she had a fall that caused the painful marks, and she burned her tongue with hot food. As Carmen maintained complete silence, school personnel could only suspect that her mother had inflicted her injuries.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ross believed that she had only aggravated Carmen's problems, and she grew ever more concerned. In due course, the school liaison suggested that Mrs. Ross could do nothing but be kind to her at school. He added that the "authorities" would be very reluctant to intervene in such a problem because Carmen was a migrant--a transient person without social or personal anchorages.

Subsequently, when Carmen again missed school for two days in a row, the liaison visited her mother and learned that Carmen had run away with a migrant worker. Mrs. Ross felt completely helpless, but she understood Carmen's attempt to escape from her torturous and cruel mother in hopes of a better life.

These three cases represent unique individual problems and, hence, do not typify the difficulties that migrant children have to deal with. Yet the conditions under which

Gabriel, Juan, Carmen, and their families lived are more or less common among migrant families. These conditions, inherent in the context of migrants' social life, include transiency, the lack of personal and social anchorages, the absence of distant goals, and economic deprivation. The problems that migrant children must cope with have their base in these conditions. Gabriel's emotional problem was deeply rooted in his lack of personal anchorage--a sense of personal security and trust in the world of interpersonal life. He was abandoned by his mother, and his father, upon whom he needed to depend, was killed in a fight. Gabriel did not trust the relatives who had custody of him. When he began to build a basis for communication with Miss Fisher, his teacher, he had to leave the school. The development of a child's sense of personal anchorage requires nurture, love, trust, and stability in one's social network. These qualities of interpersonal relations were totally missing from Gabriel's life, which rendered him unable to relate himself to others.

Juan's mental retardation is much less at issue here than his migrant's reaction to typical treatment in the nonmigrant world. There is often a problem of communication between schools and migrants. Because migrant families are transient, their children's records are often missing or incomplete when the children are enrolled in a given school. Probably Juan was incorrectly placed for the same reasons.

His academic difficulties, which could have been easily identified when he enrolled, were largely ignored. This led to his thorough bewilderment in school. His parents could not communicate with the school about his problems because they felt inadequate to deal with the school. For them, the school represented an outside world to which they were subordinate. Above all, Juan's incident dramatically exemplified the problem that Juan and his father had to deal with. On the one hand, Juan's inability to speak English was ignored by school personnel, and, on the other, his self-defense against the gym teacher was viewed as offensive conduct. Furthermore, he was arrested by the police without clear evidence of his alleged misdemeanor. His family was not even notified that he was detained in police custody. Even though Juan's arrest record would stigmatize his entire life, his father did not seek to redress Juan's case, for he was a migrant to whom no one listened. Public institutions, such as schools and police, represented an unnegotiable world that he distrusted. All he could do was acquiesce and discontinue his son's schooling.

Migrant children are subjected to situational conditions no less than their parents. This was evident in all three cases discussed here. Carmen developed her withdrawn and reticent attitudes in response to the situation created by her mother and to her deprived, unstable, and unpredictable migrant life. She had no

personal anchorage, and she was homeless. Nor could she establish distant goals for herself. She was subjected to threats to her personal security. Yet, the "authorities," as the liaison commented, were reluctant to intervene in her situation because her family was transient and had no identity in community life. The alternative left to her was to escape into continuous transience by fleeing from her mother's cruel custody.

Not all migrant children encounter those problems referred to above. Some of them are academically talented and have their parents' enthusiastic support. One school principal in Garden County told us of a fifth grade migrant student, recently admitted to his school, who excelled in all school work. He had a high IQ, and his teacher thought him an intellectual "whiz." Shortly after entering that school, he participated in a county-wide spelling contest and won first place. Constant migration had not affected his academic motivation. Undoubtedly, he was exceptional and highly unlike the typical migrant student whose academic ability and motivation are seriously hampered by situational factors.

Migrant Education, An Educational Innovation

Traditionally, schools have been primary agents of socialization for children in this country, as well as a sorting mechanism for those who conform and subscribe to the

middle-class values and expectations of the dominant society. From time immemorial, a mass-oriented educational system which was meant to epitomize democratic ideals has consistently failed to serve the needs of non-mainstream children--the children of the poor, the immigrants, the racially, culturally, linguistically different and disadvantaged. These facts are amply substantiated in scholarly literature which investigates the nature, causes and consequences of the academic difficulties experienced by minority and other atypical youngsters. Among children who are "at risk," the most educationally disadvantaged even today have been the sons and daughters of migrant workers, who labor under the multiple handicaps of their ethno-racial identity, socioeconomic marginality, and linguistic-cultural disparity, further compounded by instructional discontinuities arising from their migratory life cycle.

Prior to 1966, migrant children were forgotten by most educators and legally nonexistent for the nation's public schools. Their education was handled sporadically and haphazardly by religious and voluntary organizations, for the local communities did not consider themselves responsible for the instruction of a population which, by virtue of its nomadic occupation and existence, remained largely unknown and inaccessible to them. The problem was of such uniqueness and magnitude that it required action at the national level to find a solution. Yet, it was not

until one year after the enactment of Title I, Public Law 89-10, Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, which had actualized the newly awakened public concern for "disadvantaged children," that the plight of those caught in the migrant streams came to the attention of legislators. It resulted in the passage of an Amendment--Public Law 89-750, which provided federal support for migrant education; Section 103 of this law authorized "payments of State Educational Agencies for assistance in educating children of migratory agricultural workers." These agencies were, in turn, mandated to establish programs designed to meet the special educational and other needs of the target population.

Since that time, a number of significant amendments have further modified the Title I legislation, in an attempt to improve migrant education and to eliminate its abuses:

1967 - Public Law 90-247, which made "former" migrant students eligible for Title I services;

1969 - Public Law 91-230, which modified the funding formula from a strictly per capita accounting, to one based on the number of pupils served;

1972 - Public Law 92-318, which made preschool children eligible for services;

1974 - Public Law 93-380, which extended the definition of migrants to fishery workers;

1978 - Public Law 95-561, which provided funds for the Migrant Students Record Transfer System (MSRTS), a computerized, nation-wide system designed to collect and transmit on demand, academic and health data on migrant children.

In addition to the Title I Act, both the general provisions addressing the "disadvantaged," and the specific Section 103 for migrant children, several other programs have provided support for these youngsters:

Health Education and Welfare Programs

1. Title IV-A of the 1967 Social Security Act.
   a. Aid to Families with Dependent Children section.
   b. Title XX of the Social Securities Act.
2. Head Start (1969), funded by the Office of Child Development, Special ,D for Migrant and Indian Programs.
3. Work Study Program, funded by the Office of Education.
4. Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (VISTA) - Volunteers in Service to America.
5. Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 (Office of Surplus Property Utilization).
6. Health Act of 1975.

Department of Agriculture Programs

1. Special Food Services Program for Children (Vanick Bill).
2. Special Milk Program.
3. Commodity Distribution Program.

4. Section 13 of the National School Lunch Act (as amended 1968).

Department of Labor

1. Rural Manpower Service.

2. Title III (Section 303) of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA).

3. Public Service Careers.

On the whole, however, as revealed in our interviews, migrant children and their parents have not derived the benefits to which they are entitled under these laws for a number of reasons: lack of awareness concerning the availability of services; unfamiliarity with the means of obtaining these services; lack of transportation; confusion over eligibility requirements; fear of rejection; insufficient English proficiency; illiteracy; and, especially, negative beliefs based on often true hearsay concerning the service delivery system, (such as insufficient help, poor service, too much wrangling with the staff, and the like). Among those agencies contacted by the writers -- the Farmworkers corporation, Title I and Head Start programs, Unemployment and Welfare Offices, Food Stamps and WIC Programs, Migrant Health Clinics and Child Abuse Shelters; CETA and Church-sponsored programs in Garden County--there seemed to exist an appalling lack of coordination and a duplication of services compounded by territorial competition, a perplexing diversity of eligibility requirements, a lack of outreach efforts, and a

bewildering proliferation of confusing forms. Furthermore, none of the agency staff members had ever received any professional orientation which could have prepared them to handle migrant clients. Given these conditions, only a relatively limited impact of legislation on migrant families has been possible.

Among the legislation concerned with migrant children, Title I can be said to have achieved the greatest impact on this target population. In fact, the law has actually created an educational innovation for them, which is a radical departure from the mass-oriented, locally controlled system implemented everywhere in the country. Because of this act, migrant education today has the uniqueness of being entirely centralized, both administratively and financially, with responsibility for its implementation shared by federal and state agencies. In reality, however, three separate entities are involved in providing educational and other services to migrant children, for the task of providing instructions is delegated to local educational agencies under strict monitoring conditions.

The Role of the U. S. Department of Education for National Migrant Education Program

As defined by Public Law 89-750, the National Migrant Education Program exists primarily for funding purposes and for the facilitation of data dissemination on different

aspects of migrant education. The lion's share of the appropriations is earmarked for direct services to the children and is awarded directly to the states, upon submission of a proposal and in accordance with a predetermined formula based on a numerical count of eligible students. Since 1978, a sizeable portion of the available funds has been set aside each year for the operation and improvement of MSRTS. Finally, a small percentage of the monies is utilized to support a variety of experimental projects, such as the High School Equivalency Program (HEP), the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), and other programs which are of direct benefit to the migrant children.

In retrospect, it may be said that Title I amendments have, indeed, achieved a measurable impact on the lives of migratory children: from a total of 80,000 served in 1967, the numerical count has risen steadily each year to reach 650,000 in 1982. Yet, despite the considerable financial backing which the program has received in the past sixteen years, from a mere $10 million at the start to $250 million today, the education of migrant children has not been as successful as could be expected. A recent study revealed, for instance, that migrant children are on the average two years behind their peers academically, and that only 15 percent of them complete a high school education (Research Triangle Study, 1981). This problem has been attributed

primarily to the discontinuities experienced by the students in their education. Meanwhile, the strategies utilized by the schools to counteract these factors have not been spectacularly successful, mostly because they have been implemented on a trial-and-error basis, without a solid research foundation, by teachers and administrators with woefully inadequate training in the orientation and skills needed to teach a migratory disadvantaged population. These inadequacies, in turn, are attributable to the restrictions inherent to Public Law 89-10 (as amended) which do not permit the financing of research, as well as university-based teacher preparation.

The Role of the State Department of Education

Migrant education is primarily a state-administered program which involves the awarding of financial assistance to school districts located in farming areas. As the sole grantee of Title I funds, each state department of education is expected to develop and submit an application to the federal agency, to serve the entire territory, to administer the project upon funding, and to prepare reports accounting for its programmatic and financial outcomes. While the state education agency is fully accountable for the education of all migrant children within its geographical boundaries, it does not as a rule become involved in instructional activities; these are usually delegated to

local educational agencies. The delivery of appropriate instructional and supportive services by local schools is insured through the award of subgrants for proposed programs, which are reviewed and monitored by the state for compliance with Title I requirements.

The major responsibilities assumed by the state include the following:

1. Statewide identification and recruitment of migrant children
2. Statewide needs assessment
3. Statewide program development
4. Statewide inservice education
5. State and local interagency coordination
6. Inter- and intrastate program coordination
7. Statewide program evaluation
8. Development of State guidelines for the purchase of equipment
9. Maintenance of a State inventory for all equipment
10. Participation in the MSRTS
11. Development of an annual State application for submittal to the U. S. Department of Education
12. Inter- and intrastate dissemination of information
13. Maintenance of a separate pupil accounting system
14. Maintenance of a separate program expenditures accounting system
15. Development of specifications for the development and awarding of grants and contracts for service to migrant children
16. Technical assistance to, and monitoring of schools implementing migrant education programs

Of prime importance in each state is the recruitment of eligible students for it determines the level of funding which its program will derive from the Title I budget. This function is handled by specialists, called "recruiters" who are expected to possess the following qualifications: familiarity with the lay-out of farms located in the territory (a number of counties) assigned to them, and the ability to establish a good rapport with migrant parents. For this reason, most of these staff members are selected among members of the ethnic groups represented in the transient farm community, and many of them have worked in the migrant streams at one time or another. These characteristics give them credibility with the migrants, and permit them to gain the trust of the parents, and often enable them to locate previously unidentified children eligible for registration in the school programs.

Once a recruiter has accumulated a listing of those children residing currently in his territory, his responsibilities follow routine procedures which consist of the following: validating the youngsters' qualifications to receive migrant services (the family must have moved at least once from one district to another within the past five years), enrolling them in the appropriate district, arranging for their transportation and needed supportive services, and familiarizing their mothers and fathers with the benefits available to them.

While the duties of state recruiters fall strictly within the defined range of educational and auxiliary activities, they are often extended informally by individual workers into such areas as translation assistance, referral to other social and community agencies, and provision of emergency food in cases of dire necessity.

The recruitment of migrant children for enrollment in local school districts entails a constant searching of labor camps, and a patient interviewing of crews working in the fields, to locate eligible children. It is a thankless, never-ending task, for each day brings new family arrivals and/or departures; thus, a county circuit is no sooner completed than it must be started all over again. In addition, the work requires a great deal of persistence and detective acumen on the part of the recruiter, for migrant parents are apt to conceal information concerning their children, sometimes to protect themselves against deportation if they are illegal aliens, or to shield handicapped youngsters from painful school experiences but, more often than not, to increase family income by having older siblings work in the fields. Indeed Patrick Hogan, who is in charge of the MSRTS program at the National Migrant office in Washington, D.C., indicated that despite increased recruitment efforts, the current computer count still fell short of reality for some 50 percent of the migrant children still remained unidentified, actually

reaching adulthood without having ever set foot in a classroom (Hogan interview, 1981).

This unfortunate recruitment situation has been steadily aggravated by the influx of undocumented Mexicans into areas which had been previously served by Puerto Rican contract workers, a phenomenon attributable to the farmers' desire to economize on labor costs by hiring illegal migrants at below minimum wages. The situation was noted during the June 1981 interviews among the families encountered by one team member; only three claimed to be Puerto Rican, and another two admitted to being Mexican-American; all of their children except for two mentally retarded youngsters who, the parents stated, "must be cared for in the family," were attending school. The remaining interviewees drove dilapidated vehicles, usually with Texas plates, and spoke very little English. Apparently, they had entered the United States illegally for, despite their obvious destitution, none of the adults sought food or shelter from local agencies; they lived in their trucks and searched for work, surviving on discarded fruits and vegetables until a farmer hired them. None of their children were enrolled in the school. Later that week, inquiries made at the local Farmworkers Corporation revealed that the number of clients who were being served by them at that time had been significantly reduced from the previous

year, a fact which they attributed to the rise in Mexican illegal entry.

Undocumented workers are not eligible for many of the services normally available to other migrants; education, however, is an exception and all children are entitled to attend school, whether they are illegal aliens or not. Yet, the parents' fear of deportation is so great that it prevents them from taking advantage of such schooling opportunities for their offsprings. In fact, the very appearance of a stranger within sight of a labor camp suffices to trigger the immediate disappearance of these families until the danger has passed. In some locations, farmers have conveniently equipped the floor of their workers' cabins with trapdoors to facilitate these precipitated exists. In consequence of the situation, not one single "acknowledged" illegal child has been recruited as yet officially to date in Garden County.

Closely tied in with, and equally as important as, recruitment is the maintenance of school records for validated children. This operation is centralized in Little Rock, Arkansas through the Migrant Student Record Transfer System, the nation-wide computerized data bank network mentioned earlier, which extends to teletype terminals located in 150 strategic areas. Its major function is to intake, update, and output migrant data on demand--general, academic, health, and other information pertaining to

migrant children. In addition, the computer also provides each state with periodic reports summarizing the collected information.

The establishment of this MSRTS facility in 1970, its validation in 1975, and its subsequent funding by Title I in 1978 were unprecedented attempts on the part of state migrant education officials (working through an interstate committee) to solve the perennial problem of inadequate educational information about transient students. While theoretically, the concept of registering these data in a central location and making them accessible to schools in machine readable form was a brilliant one, in reality, the efficacy of the system has been undermined by a variety of problems, ranging from errors, delays, or oversights in the transmission of records, to overloads in the computer's intake or scanning capability, and to the relay of incomplete or questionable information resulting from locally defined academic criteria. Until recently, for instance, the recording of standardized test results on MSRTS forms was all but useless, due to the incredible diversity of instruments employed by the school system: no less than 613 different tests were listed last year in the computer reports forwarded to the states. Yet, if one considers the facts that the computer kept track of some 650,000 students in 1982, each of whom might have passed through as many as 5 or 6 school systems in the course of

that year, and that the data originating in local educational agencies are apt to be transcribed by lay individuals with minimal computer understanding or training, then the shortcomings noted in the system cannot really be considered excessive at this point.

In an attempt to correct some of its acknowledged problems, the MSRTS introduced the Skills Information System (SIS) in 1979, whereby lists of criterion-referenced basic skills could be coded and transmitted to a school system, in such a way as to identify precisely for the recipient which skills a child has already mastered. With the data on hand, a teacher is now able to proceed to the next skills level of instruction without having to waste time on testing. Although this innovation has increased the reliability and accuracy of MSRTS data, it has not lessened the frequency and length of the delays in the transmission of the information.

In one particular area, health information, the MSRTS has achieved a significant degree of efficiency, perhaps because of the precision and universality of medical terms and definitions of health problems. In at least one instance, it has actually saved lives when it was called upon to locate over "200 children who were potential victims or carriers of typhoid fever."

In the course of investigating the life and educational conditions of migrants in Garden County, we came to realize

the enormous research potential vested in the MSRTS system. Yet, despite the benefits which would accrue to migratory children from the implementation of such research, the valuable information stored in the computer has not as yet been utilized for this purpose. Clearly, it would be a simple task to write a computer program to abstract and update annually from the accumulated data, model profiles of migrant children which would identify their prevalent needs and problems, their major strengths and weaknesses, their principal interests and career orientations. These "behavioral maps" could, in turn, be utilized to establish networks of collaborating schools and teacher teams, and to develop with them common core curricula based on migratory experiences, which would insure a continuity of meaningful learning for those youngsters whose families follow predictable itinerant patterns.

The feasibility of such a project was explored in 1981 in collaboration with the State Department of Education, and a preliminary screening of the data was completed. The results indicated that the project under consideration would require extensive commitments in terms of primary and secondary personnel, as well as equipment and auxiliary facilities, none of which would be available without external financing. And, unfortunately, such monetary support could not be derived from the very program which would benefit directly from the research findings.

A second major obstacle which could also stand in the way of this undertaking is the rigid control placed on accessibility to MSRTS records. As stated in the Overview Report issued by the National Migrant Education Office, the data bank in Little Rock, Arkansas consists of (1981:6):

> MSRTS information relevant to the placement and care of children includes school attendance patterns; health screenings, administrations and subsequent treatments; urgent and chronic health conditions; the status of treatment procedures; inoculations needed and administered; standardized tests administered and the dates and scores; and special educational programs of student involvement or interest.
>
> The MSRTS safeguards the privacy and confidentiality of student information through the use of a uniform record which does not permit the recording of derogatory information. Additionally, the records are made available only to authorized educational agencies within the States with summary statistical reports to the U.S. Department of Education. Specific safeguards include no communication with unauthorized terminals; a precise tape and message format available only to authorized personnel; peculiar student file access security codes; a peculiar set of student data required to access student files; field validity checks; and access data that must match precisely that of the student electronic file.

Documentary confidentiality and accessibility, however, would not really present insurmountable problems when viewed in the framework of the type of collaborative setting required by the nature of an MSRTS-based research, one which would involve a university, a state agency, and the National Migrant Office, in cooperation with MSRTS facility. What is

unattainable at the present time is the needed monetary backing.

In addition to participation in the maintenance of a centralized data retrieval system on their target population, state educational agencies have also cooperated with the National Migrant Education Office to formulate a set of eleven national goals which have been utilized since 1971 as guidelines in the development of instructional and supportive services to be provided throughout the nation for migrant children. They are as follows:

Instructional Services

1. Provide the opportunity for each migrant child to improve communications skills necessary for varying situations.

2. Provide the migrant child with preschool and kindergarten experiences geared to his psychological and physiological development that will prepare him to function successfully.

3. Provide specially designed programs in the academic disciplines (language arts, mathematics, social studies, and other academic endeavors) that will increase the migrant child's capabilities to function at a level concomitant with his potential.

4. Provide specially-designed activities which will increase the migrant child's social growth, positive self-concept, and group interaction skills.

5. Provide programs that will improve the academic skill, prevocational orientation and vocational skill training for older migrant children.

6. Implement programs, utilizing every available Federal, State, and local resource through coordinated funding, in order to improve mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural differences among children.

Supportive Services

7. Develop in each program a component of intrastate and interstate communications for exchange of student records, methods, concepts, and materials to assure that sequence and continuity will be an inherent part of the migrant child's total education program.

8. Develop communications involving the school, the community and its agencies, and the target group to insure coordination of all available resources for the benefit of migrant children.

9. Provide for the migrant child's physical and mental well-being by including dental, medical, nutritional, and psychological services.

10. Provide a program of home-school coordination with established relationships between the project staff and the clientele served in order to improve the effectiveness of migrant education programs and the process of parental reinforcement of student effort.

11. Increase staff self-awareness of their personal biases and possible prejudices, and upgrade their skills for teaching migrant children by conducting inservice and preservice workshops.

In terms of implementation, several of the above objectives have remained primarily in the realm of ideals and theory; more specifically goal 6, which addresses skills and knowledges, has seldom been successfully achieved in regular school programs; goals 8 and 10, which are literally

impossible to accomplish, since the target population lives in isolation and often puts in a 12-14 hour work day; and goal 11, which is unattainable without an intensive teacher preparation program. Should the realistic achievement of these stated goals be rendered feasible in the future, then migrant education may be expected to achieve its full potential.

The Role of the Local Educational Agency

A school district which caters to migrant children for any period of time during the calendar year is authorized to apply for state assistance to defray the costs associated with these efforts. In order to obtain the necessary funds, a district is required to submit a full proposal delineating the specific instructional and supportive activities to be conducted on site. In the instructional category are included remediation in basic skills and other academic subjects; bilingual communication; prevocational counseling; vocational skills training; social interaction skills, self-concept, and cultural development. The supportive area concerns the provision of health (medical and dental), nutritional and psychological services, as well as home-school coordination to insure parental support of the students' academic efforts. Whether the school program is run throughout the year, or restricted to a four to six week summer session, it is periodically monitored by state

specialists, to verify the district's compliance with the proposed plan and its appropriate expenditure of migrant funds.

Migrant children are entitled to all the educational and auxiliary benefits available to other students in the schools; in addition, they are eligible for whatever supplementary assistance can be provided with migrant funds. The intention of Public Law 89-750 is, indeed, not to supplant but to expand existing local commitments, in order to compensate the learning disadvantages of the target population. Once a transient boy or girl is enrolled in the system, his/her records are requested through MSRTS and are hopefully received within a few weeks. More often than not, however, delays make it necessary for the teachers to assess the student's academic status for placement at the appropriate grade level. Quick "Locator" tests, individually administered and requiring no more than five minutes, are often used for this purpose, in place of more precise but more costly standardized measurements. Grade placement is subsequently determined on the combined basis of test results, chronological age and pupil-derived information; it may be adjusted later on if need be, when MSRTS data are received or when classroom experiences indicate the desirability of such a change. Whatever academic deficiency is noted results in a referral to supplementary migrant personnel--teacher, aide,

psychologists, and remedial specialists.

Concurrently with this intellectual/psychological assessment, physical examinations are conducted to identify the health problems of each child including physiological, dental, visual, and auditory aspects, all of which may affect detrimentally the child's learning capacity and overall development. As noted repeatedly in extant migrant literature, and as confirmed by interviews with Patrick Hogan, MSRTS director in the National Migrant Education Program, Sarah Daugherty, health coordinator in Garden County, and with specialists in Garden County agencies providing health services to migrant families, youngsters who travel in the migrant streams are often in deplorable physical condition, with problems ranging from a plain lack of cleanliness to ulcerous insect bites, from skin diseases to intestinal parasites, from untreated ear infections to pesticide poisoning, from dysentery to chronic illnesses (such as tuberculosis), and from eye defects to deceptive obesity resulting from malnutrition. Diagnosed complications are reported to MSRTS. They are handled on school site or, if necessary, referred to the appropriate physician or health clinic.

The progress made in each school toward the solving of migrant children's problems--academic or health-related--is documented by the local coordinator of migrant activities in the school, then corroborated later on by a state monitor.

These data continue to be maintained and periodically updated for as long as the students remain enrolled in the district. Since migrant parents seldom announce their departure from the area to school personnel, each district maintains careful attendance records on these children, which are transmitted daily to MSRTS; any absence may mean that the family has moved to another location, and the child becomes the responsibility of another school system.

Migrant Education in Garden County

Garden County is not a home-base state for the majority of migrant workers who travel north each year from one location to the next in rotation with the crops to reach its farms in the spring. It is one, however for seasonal laborers who restrict their journeys to more manageable distances. Consequently, some of the schools find it necessary to organize educational activities for transient children on a twelve-month basis, with two regular semesters and a four-to-six week summer session.

During the academic year, the migrant programs offered in Garden County vary considerably from one system to another. In many cases, they are closely related to, but not actually blended with, other special projects organized for non-migrant children. Such is the case for bilingual instruction, which is mandated by the state whenever twenty or more students of common linguistic background are

enrolled in a district, and for its alternative, English-as-a-Second Language instruction. In case of smaller enrollments regular Title I funded services, not specifically derived from Section 103, fall into this category as well, and are automatically available to migrant children, for they are intended to compensate the academic deficits of all "disadvantaged" youngsters whose parents' income falls below the poverty level. Since all of these programs function independently from each other, their contents are not coordinated into an effective structure, but rather pieced together to fit the child's schedule. The results of such arrangements are not always productive for the recipients.

During the academic year, the prevailing instructional format of migrant education follows the "pull-out" pattern, whereby students eligible for supplementary migrant assistance are withdrawn from regular classes for part of the school day to receive tutorial or whatever other help they need in order to function adequately in the academic environment. As a rule, they are seldom segregated in special groups, on the assumption that mainstreaming into the regular program will facilitate their social and educational adaptation to life conditions in the stable community by exposing them to shared learning experiences and daily interaction with non-migrant peers.

There are, at present, some thirty funded year-round programs in Garden County. With these financial resources, schools are able to employ special staff members including supplementary administrators, teachers, teacher aides, remedial specialists, home-school liaison personnel, health professionals, and clerical workers, who function as a team to determine and meet the special needs of their assigned target group. They provide each child with the individual attention needed to facilitate his/her integration into the regular instructional sequence. In this manner, assistance is provided to individual students in subject areas and academic skills, such as test-taking or study skills, and the relevance of classroom experiences to daily living is demonstrated for them through pragmatic applications, by means of field trips and mass media explorations. One teacher, for example, used clothing sale advertisements in the local newspaper to illustrate the applicability of percentage computation to shopping. Such instructional strategies exploit the natural interest of migrant children in concrete, useful things to teach them the abstract concepts they need, and to orient them realistically to the occupational world outside the migrant stream.

Similarly, the health, social, and psychological problems of these students are identified, and solutions prescribed as well as implemented by the migrant team, in cooperation with the regular school staff. All too often,

however, the youngsters leave the school district before any lasting impact can be achieved on their scholastic and other difficulties. For this reason, the provisions established by such laws as PL 94-142 for special education are largely ineffectual in the case of a migratory population, since the referral process (requiring some 90 days to implement) nearly always exceeds in duration that of their school attendance in a district.

Summer programs are available to migrant children in Garden County. Regularly offered by large districts and educational services commissions, they cover the gamut of grade levels from kindergarten through twelfth grade, even though adolescents beyond seventh and eighth grades infrequently enroll, preferring the income they can earn working in the fields.

During this time of the year, the state intensifies its recruitment activities, in an attempt to reach those youngsters whose schooling suffers from constant interruptions as a result of their family's migratory life and, at the same time, to provide them with a welcome relief from the sterile environment of labor camps. In consequence of these locating efforts, the July-August school sessions are well-attended in Garden County.

Summer programs last from four to six weeks and are generally comprehensive. They include academic, recreational and health services, and they are complemented

by breakfast and lunch programs. The instructional component emphasizes the improvement of basic skills in reading, language arts, and mathematics, but it also involves a diversity of learning experiences designed to introduce the children to community life outside the migrant environment--field trips to museums, zoos, historical sites, and local industries, visits to recreational sites, practical instruction in health care, physical education, arts, crafts, music, home economics, and social activities such as song and dance programs, fiestas, and variety shows. In one particular school, summer session culminated in an arts and crafts exhibition, displaying a variety of individual talents and modes of expression, combined with an ethnic food festival to which parents were invited, and which many attended despite the economic sacrifice it entailed.

As often stressed by migrant educators, and noted in our interviews, migrant mothers and fathers are, indeed, interested in their children's schooling, and their lack of involvement in school activities is directed by economic exigencies rather than by a lack of concern for educational opportunities. Amelia, one of the migrant mothers visited by us in 1980 and in 1981, actually volunteered to collect information on the perceptions of other parents in Garden County and refused to be remunerated for her work, explaining that: "I want to help the teachers, and I can do

this at night after work." when queried as to why only three of the fifteen teenagers in the camp attended the summer program, the same informant reported: "We want them to go, but we can't! It has been a bad season, and we need the money." Her words were prophetic for, two days later, the whole camp lay idle, waiting for crops to ripen. By the end of the week, families with three and five children faced stoically a week-end without food, still hoping that they would not have to resort to food-stamps or charity for survival. Now, they wished that they had sent all of their children to school, if only to assure them of two substantial meals each day, but it was too late to do so.

The Impact of Migrant Education: An Assessment

Since its inception in 1967, the Title I Migrant Education program has been evaluated periodically to assess its impact on transient children. A total of nine major studies were completed up to now:

1971 - Wednesday's Children, a report of the National Committee on the Education of Migrant Children.

1973 - Impact of Federal Programs to Improve the Living Conditions of Migrants and Other Seasonal Farmworkers, an assessment by the U.S. General Accounting Office.

1974 - Evaluation of the Impact of Title I, ESEA Programs for Migrant Children of Migrant Agricultural Workers, an assessment carried out by Exotech Systems, Inc.

1974 - HEW Audit Agency Migrant Education Program, a report on the financial structure of migrant children.

1977 - Migrant Child Welfare, a study completed by InterAmerica Research Associates.

1977 - Promises to Keep: The Continuing Crisis in the Education of Migrant Children, a report of the National Child Labor Committee.

1977 - An Analysis of the Administration of Title I Migrant Education Program, produced by the National Council of La Raza.

1979 - Who Cares? Who Counts?, a survey of migrant children's needs, conducted by St. Edwards University in Texas.

1981 - A Study of the ESEA Title I Migrant Education Programs, reported by the Research Triangle Institute, North Carolina.

The general conclusions stated in these surveys consistently indicated that flaws and abuses existed in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the migrant

education programs at different levels. They also pointed out that many eligible children were being overlooked and that validated students were neither achieving at grade level nor completing a high school education, that parental involvement remained insignificant, and that schools were not fully responsive to the needs and characteristics of their migratory population.

Predictably, the product of this chaotic situation, as recently noted in a fact sheet on migrant families distributed by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education, is a population of "confused, overaged, and underachieving students, with a poor attitude toward school, and prime drop-out candidates" (1981).

The conclusions of these nationwide studies were found to be valid in Garden County. The data collected in the area yielded two significant items of information related to public school personnel. They brought to light the prevalence of unrealistic expectations among educators vis-a-vis migrant children and their parents, and the lack of preparedness on their part to cope effectively with their educational and other problems. In several instances, for example, teachers assigned to mixed classes denied blandly that transient youngsters were "different" in any way from their peers, stating: "I wouldn't know which ones are migrants in my classes." Yet, these same individuals would, later on, voice a remark which disclosed the inaccuracy of

the earlier statement, such as: "Why don't they write their names on their papers?" "They are so messy and smelly!" "I cant' get them to say anything in class!" "They won't take their work home to show their parents." "There isn't a single book, magazine, or newspaper in their homes." "These parents never come to school."

One question, routinely asked in the course of our interviews with school personnel, soon revealed the key to these inexplicable comments on the part of experienced educators: in all the years (from 2 to 10) they had taught migratory children, none of them had ever visited a labor camp, worked on a farm (even for one hour), or experienced the uncertainties of seasonal employment. In fact, such was the case for most of the personnel in local educational agencies serving the major farming areas in Garden County.

Clearly, as studies including our research have disclosed, the schools (and their staffs) have not served as a bridge between the disparate worlds of migrant workers and the mainstream community and, therein, lies one of the major defects of migrant education. Ideally, educational institutions are intended to serve equally effectively the needs of all the children; in reality, however, they succeed in this task only in those cases where the experiential background of the learner is compatible with the instructional socialization processes in schooling.

Testing and Evaluation in Migrant Education

For a population of students forever on the go, testing is a key factor in the determination of appropriate grade placement whenever they enter a new district. Not only has the diversity of measurement tools used in the schools been incredibly extensive, as noted earlier, but the relative effectiveness of their assessment potential is equally varied. On the whole, three types of instruments have been used in migrant education, and each possesses specific advantages and disadvantages:

1. Norm-Referenced Tests

Widely used in the schools, these instruments evaluate a learner in relation to his peers, and diagnose his achievement potential. They do not, however, provide an accurate estimate of the skills mastered by the testee.

2. Criterion-Referenced Tests

In contrast with the first type of measurement, these tests do assess the learner's skills performance in specific subjects. They are less popular than norm-referenced examinations because they are costly and time-consuming.

3. Locator Tests

These tools are not as accurate as those listed above, nor do they possess the capacity to measure academic learning gains. They are useful strictly for the purpose of grade placement, for they permit a quick determination (accurate within three months) of a student's performance

level. One such instrument is the Zip test, a five minute individual test which assesses the student's proficiency in mathematics, reading, and general English.

Pragmatically speaking, none of the measures used in public schools in Garden County is appropriate for migrant students. In addition to the flaws of linguistic and cultural biases noted in standardized tests when they are applied to any atypical population, several other factors contribute to the general inefficacy of assessment programs in migrant education (ERIC Fact Sheet, 1981):

1. Highly mobile students are not enrolled in a district long enough to be included in a regular testing program.

2. Testing schedules and pre- and posttest intervals vary from one district to another, thereby invalidating cross-district comparisons of results.

3. No two migrant education programs operate in like manner with respect to objectives, timing, and duration, contents; their outcomes are not comparable.

4. No test has been constructed for, or normed on a migrant population; none may, therefore, be considered valid for such use.

5. No test is sensitive to the learning gains of low achievers or to minimal gains achieved after a short period of time.

Under the circumstances, it is nearly impossible to measure realistically the learning achievements of migrant children and, in view of the diversity of school offerings in regular as well as in special programs, it is also

virtually futile to attempt an objective evaluation of migrant education as it has been done in the past, on the basis of conventional data and by means of traditional tools. In this area, as well as in the realm of instruction and parental involvement, innovation will have to be undertaken before progress can be achieved. But, in the long run, there is only one way to gauge the impact of migrant education: that is through annual comparisons of MSRTS statistics on a yearly basis. On the day that these figures show evidence of a positive downward reversal of the astronomical dropout rate recorded up to now for migrant teenagers, success will have begun. For it will mean that schools will have improved their instructional effectiveness and retention power, migrant parents and teachers will have become allies in the development of a productive career-orientation, and students will have learned at long last the true value of an education for their futures.

Teacher Training in Migrant Education

One of the major reasons why public school educators have been unable to cope successfully with the alien conditions inherent to migrant education arises from their lack of professional preparation in this area, a situation which is, in turn, attributable to the near total absence of concern by institutions of higher education for this challenging innovation.

When Public Law 89-7-0 was passed, amending Title I, ESEA (Public Law 89-10) to include migrant children in the definition of "disadvantaged," it did not specify any provision for teacher training. Although the national goals established for the program stressed the need for this kind of preparation, no effort was made by the State Committee charged with the formulation of these goals to seek ways of implementing their recommendations.

In 1973, a conference on Migrant Staff Development was held by the National Committee on the Education of Migrant Children. It was noted at that time that two prevailing patterns of inservice training were being implemented throughout the nation: pre-summer workshops lasting from two to four days, provided by state education agencies of local educational agencies; and six-week long residential institutes, offered during summers by these same institutions. Of the two approaches, the former was found to be the most common, probably because of its relative inexpensiveness and ease of implementation. The latter format required extensive financial support and, in addition, deprived the school districts of the services of the enrolled teachers for the summer session. In neither case was a teacher preparation institution engaged in the training of the participants.

The situation has not changed throughout the 1970's. Our ERIC search of migrant staff development indicates a

total absence of materials or information related to that topic. This finding was confirmed by those of a nationwide survey of migrant education programs conducted in 1979 by St. Edwards University in Texas (1979). As noted in the Director's report, no evidence was found that a systematic training program existed for migrant educators anywhere in the United States, despite the urgent need for such a university-based endeavor.

Two years later the National Migrant Education Program distributed literature describing "exemplary programs" validated by the Joint Dissemination Review Panel in Washington, D.C. Among the nine projects reviewed in the document, not a single one included a training plan for migrant educators (1981).

While under the terms of the law State Departments of Education are mandated to provide inservice training to school personnel, the extent to which they are able to discharge this obligation is, at best, minimal, given the extent of their funding, and the expertise of their staff. Under the circumstances, the workshops offered by them tend to restrict instruction to such direct, pragmatic matters as the uses of the MSRTS, testing, Basic Skills instruction, field trip scheduling, health data, and record keeping. There is no attempt to equip teachers with a thorough knowledge of migrant life style, backed by field work in labor camp, nor even to introduce them to those skills of

crosscultural communication which are indispensable for the achievement of effective classroom interaction in non-traditional settings.

As matters stand now, the consensus of opinions among state educators and school administrators categorically points to their expectation that migrant teachers will be not only competent in subject matter instruction, but also sensitive to the cultural orientation of the children with whom they work. Acting on the unfounded belief that such requirements will be met simply by selecting personnel matched demographically with the population to be served, these agencies make special efforts to recruit their staff from the ethnic groups to which a majority of the migrant students belong in the district. Although a cultural background identical to that of the target population is not required for employment in migrant schools, the value of a shared cultural heritage is both highly regarded and deemed important in facilitating the handling of sensitive problems and the development of a good rapport between the adults and their charges.

Remarkably enough, the fact that these measures have not succeeded in improving measurably the effectiveness of migrant instruction, as shown by the significantly limited gains achieved so far by the learners, tends to have been overlooked by administrators. The situation is somewhat akin to the layman's belief that a native speaker of a

language will, a priori, be a good teacher of that language to children of like background. This is an illusion that many a school administrator did adopt, when he was faced with the task of providing bilingual instruction in his district, and eventually came to regret.

At the national level, recognition of the need for intensive teacher preparation is rendered futile by the absence of separate funding to support it. This financial situation, in turn, serves as a negative incentive in motivating university interest to diversify program offerings, in order to accommodate migrant teacher preparation. Unless these conditions become modified, progress in this area is not likely to occur in the near future.

To summarize, in this chapter we have dealt with migrant children's educational experiences. Those experiences and the problems these children have to cope with can best be understood in the social context of migrant life adapted to situational conditions. That context largely determines migrant children's motivational orientation toward schooling, for it deprives them of cognitive experiences common to most children. Migrant children have only limited access to cultural capital. Added to these elements of migrant life are the transiency, poverty, and the environment of primary social relations that both contain their experience and negatively influence

their development of cognitive skills. Migrant education is an educational innovation developed to attack the cognitive and other developmental deficiencies of migrant children. In various respects it represents an unprecedented convergence of relatively extensive legislative and educational commitments at both the national and local levels. While it has advanced in its short history, it has suffered a number of flaws in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of its program. In particular, migrant education is characterized by the contradiction between its aims and implementation.

Chapter V

Concluding Remarks

These concluding remarks are not meant to summarize the foregoing discussion, but to extend it through general comments derived from observations in the body of the study.

Farm Workers and the Unnegotiable World

Unskilled, underemployed, and unemployed people in the contiguous United States, Puerto Rico, and Mexico constitute the main source of farm workers. Farm labor involves cutting and picking vegetables, as well as weeding and hoeing the fields. Although cutting lettuce, a specialty reserved for men, requires a degree of practice, it is basically simple manual labor demanding mostly physical strength and stamina.

Therefore, farm labor attracts underschooled youths, unskilled men and women, and people out of work. They occupy the lowest rung of social stratification. As they have very little security in their work and their wages are both low and uncertain, their commitment to farm labor is always tentative. Yet many farm workers have few alternatives but to continue farm labor, for they lack other employable skills that might lead to greater income. Often they are forced to accept insecure work, low wages, dismal living conditions, and uncertain features.

Farm workers' lives are situation-centered. Each situation they encounter perpetuates their limited access to income, work, housing, education, improved living conditions, and other vital services. In other words, they are constantly subjected to situational conditions of life. Hence, they have little personal leverage to impose their demands on the situations that face them. That is, they cannot define these situations in their terms. The world of work and social conditions is presented to them as unnegotiable and external to their control. Their lives are influenced by the factors existing in such given situations as crops, weather, seasons, farmers, crew leaders, accommodations and transportation.

Farm workers are constantly transient. Migrants move season after season. Seasonal workers do not indulge in geographical mobility to the extent migrants do,but their place of work often changes from one farm to another. Migrants are homeless and suffer from a lack of personal anchorages in society. They do not have an institutional frame of identity that clearly defines their privileges and rights.

Farmers in Garden County take advantage of the weaknesses of farm laborers but are not ultimately responsible for their exploitation. It is the structure of the national economy that demands cheap and exploited labor, without which the cost of the vegetables everyone consumes

daily would be much higher. It is the economy that demands cheap labor from people in a lower social stratum, people who cannot impose their needs on their employers or the national economy. In other words, migrant and seasonal labor is a function of the economic system that generates inequality. In a fundamental sense, problems experienced by farm workers are, to a great extent, derivative of a structural problem of society. Although stratified society permits individuals to gain differential access to social resources, including employment, it generates pressures that severely restrict access to those resources by a whole social class of people, including farm workers. The result is the structural exclusion of farm workers from full participation in the economic sphere of activity.

Structural exclusion is a consequence of the development of social stratification. The minimum level of differentiation and complexity is found in simple egalitarian societies. Egalitarian society is characterized by an absence of institutions and their related features: it provides all individuals with relatively equal social recognition and positions of valued status as long as they are capable of filling their positions. In contrast, stratified society is distinguished by a growth of social and political positions of high prestige and power and to natural and social resources. This process establishes complex socioeconomic classes associated with the

differential levels of living, security, wealth, and property.

Despite being constrained by situational and structural factors, farm workers are remarkably adaptable, displaying personal perseverance and willingness to work even under intolerable conditions. Many farm workers are willing to travel many hundreds of miles in search of work and to live in dismal labor camps far from their families. We observed that they are willing to endure strenuous, even backbreaking, work under the blazing sun. During the midsummer they rise at 4:00 a.m. and continue work through midafternoon. To earn livings they accept meager wages, amounting to only a little over $3.00 an hour, and acquiesce in personal and social homelessness. Not only do they exhibit the ability to be active in their work, they also demonstrate the ability to respect human decency in adverse conditions, as we saw in Roberto's story, as well as to face the unnegotiable world passively and to respond impulsively to frustrating situations. Moreover, they are resilient and patient in their acceptance of the external conditions imposed on them. The farm workers whose profiles we presented reveal these qualities.

The Current Perspective of Migrant Education

The conceptual framework of migrant education is specifically delineated in the documents which are prepared

and disseminated each year by the U. S. Department of Education, National Migrant Education Office. Among those publications are Education Briefing Papers which succinctly identify the central orientation of the program and the scope of its authorized activities. The May 1981 issue, to which we referred in the preceding chapter, is particularly significant because it established the latest authoritative definition of migrant education for the future. This briefing paper recognizes the problem of migrant children as follows (U.S. Department of Education, 1981):

> Nine out of 10 children of migrant workers never enter high school and only 3 out of 10 of those who do ever graduate (sic).
>
> The nation has perhaps more than a million children whose parents follow the sun, picking fruits and vegetables in fields from Florida to Maine, Mississippi to Michigan, and California to Washington State. They are born into some of the grimmest poverty in the country. They suffer from illnesses such as rickets, scurvy, pinworms, anemia, and malnutrition. They are isolated from the communities near their work. By 12 or 13 years of age they join their parents in the fields and spend the rest of their lives topping onions, picking sugar beets, and pulling tomatoes from the vine.
>
> Children of migrant workers seldom go past the 4th or 5th grade, and since their families move so often--every few weeks at the peak of the harvest season--they are never in one school long enough to have a chance to really learn. Some never enter a classroom because they have to babysit for their younger brothers or sisters or, what is more often the case, they must work in the field because even their meager earnings are needed to help feed the family. To make matters worse, many of them can't speak English or speak it only as a second language.

The above passage outlines clearly and accurately the pathological conditions of migrant children's lives and their disastrous effect on the youngsters' education. What it fails to describe, however, is the nature of those social and economic causes which account for this shameful situation. In other words, these briefing papers depict a syndrome of deep-seated problems without looking at their infrastructural and social structural bases. In this respect, then, the portrayal of migrant children conveyed by the federal documents cannot by any means be considered accurate and exhaustive, since it does ignore major aspects of their problem.

Another related limitation is inherent in the formulation of the eleven national goals to which we referred also in the previous chapter. Their adoption by the National Migrant Education program may be to constitute the official response to the pathological state of migrant youngsters. The very wording of these eleven objectives reveals an uncompromising subscription to what has been commonly called the "deficit theory" in connection with compensatory programs designed for disadvantaged populations. Notice the key terms, such as "improve," "increase," and "function successfully," employed in the description of these goals. It follows that migrant boys and girls are perceived to have deficiencies revealed in their individual biographies. Hence, migrant education is

designed to offset such inadequacies, presumably in order to equalize academic and social competence of the learners. We saw this compensatory orientation of migrant education in Garden county schools, where classroom instruction revolved around a prescribed sequence of first diagnosing the students' learning difficulties, then attempting to remedy them with individual attention and remedial exercises.

What is striking in the documents issued by the National Migrant Education Office, is the concentration upon the symptoms of migratory children's problems, clearly reflecting the orientation of the program in the past decades. It goes without saying that, as in medicine, the symptoms exhibited by the patient, (or student in this case) must be identified and treated. But their successful treatment is by no means tantamount to attacking their causes. As Emile Durkheim cogently stated in Suicide, collective tendencies, as described in the briefing papers, depend on conditions external to individuals. They affect the individuals from without (Durkheim, 1951). If the external conditions affecting migrant children are not diagnosed and understood, their problems are likely to be viewed as difficulties inherent in their individual lives. In other words, such difficulties tend to be perceived as largely internal matters of motivation and learning abilities. Though this psychological and biographic approach recognized certain kinds of interaction between

individuals and the external factors influencing them, it tends to view their problem in a cognitive frame of reference where developmental deficiencies are judged most crucial. This particular orientation is exemplified in the educational programs offered to migrant children throughout the nation. And, therein lies one of their major weaknesses.

In short, education for migrant and seasonal children is based on the psychological and biographic approach. Admittedly the symptoms need to be treated and the deficiencies must be filled, but the same problems will recur should the school not pay attention to their causes. Even though certain migrant children are able to take advantage of schooling, so as to participate in social mobility, the major structural causes influencing farm workers and their children will reproduce the same pathological difficulties, deficiencies, and symptoms for younger children and future generations as they have done in the past. These structural causes must be changed, lest they replicate their debilitating effects endlessly.

A New Moral Perspective

For migrant education to be effective, it needs a new moral perspective. It is American society that perpetuates migrant and seasonal labor and profits from it. Hence, migrant education must be based on the pedagogical

assumption that migrant problems are not individual and personal matters, but a problem to be shared by the whole society, the approach to which requires the cooperation of both migrant and nonmigrant Americans. Therefore, migrant education ought to be a more inclusive process than it has been. Its principal commitment should be not only to the current remedial, bilingual, nutritional, and medical services, all of which are intended to correct developmental deficiencies, but also to developing students' critical consciousness of migrant life and its place in society.

Students' consciousness of the migrant life, if developed properly, will lead to identifying and understanding the structural causes of migrants' problems, which are not only obscure but almost universally unknown to students and adults alike. It is no exaggeration to assume that the majority of Americans who eat relatively inexpensive vegetables daily, do not understand why migrant labor is needed and why most farm workers are deprived of equitable access to economic, political, educational, and other social resources. Both migrant and nonmigrant children at different grade levels should participate in the project, so that they may become genuinely and critically aware of migrant life and its situation-centered adaptation. A critical consciousness would grow as the inquiry into the infrastructural and social structural aspects of migrant life is systematically pursued. Such an inquiry will

promote sensitivity toward and an understanding of such fundamental questions as:

> Why do the agricultural and national economics require migrant and seasonal labor?
>
> How is the farm worker's cheap labor related to underemployment and unemployment?
>
> How are the farm worker's wages determined?
>
> What are the sociological consequences of the migrants' situation-centered lives (dismal living conditions, meager earnings, work patterns, mobility, recruitment patterns, etc.)?
>
> How is the migrant's work related to Americans' daily consumption of food?

Conceptualized in this broad framework, migrant education is based on the hypothesis that migrants' developmental deficiencies are not simply attributes of individual biographies viewed in a psychological frame of reference, but are tenaciously associated with the structural conditions of migrant life, a crucial sociological variable determining the nature and scope of deficiencies. Migrant education will be designed to make both migrant and nonmigrant children aware that the infrastructural and social structural conditions of the farm workers must be altered if the developmental problems cited are to be eliminated--an awareness necessary for social change.

Migrants' liberation from the severe structural constraints and constant subordination to haphazard situational conditions will begin when they develop a true

consciousness of the structural conditions of their own lives: what they are, why they live the way they do, why they are forced to live that way. To liberate themselves, they must first understand their placement in society and the sociological variables contributing to it. By defining the societal structure that generates their pathological lives, migrant education can help migrants liberate themselves.

Simply put, the ultimate moral goal of migrant education should be to alter the social and economic conditions that perpetuate such pathological lives in American society.

A New Pedagogical Approach

Before considering further needed modifications in migrant education, one must acknowledge the fact that migrant education is an unprecedented innovation in the field of education. It is centralized and nationalized in terms of funding, administration, record-keeping, and accountability. As such, the program demonstrates a clear understanding of the unusual circumstances surrounding transient children. In eighteen years of experimentation, the centralized approach has achieved considerable success in such essential areas as student recruitment, interdistrict and interstate cooperation, and basic skills assessment. What has held it back so far is in part one of

pedagogical orientation in the determination of program goals and strategies to be implemented at the local level, all of which are tainted by a self-defeating compensatory orientation.

In order to be effective, migrant education calls for a different conceptualization of the migrant child from that which has prevailed up to now. It requires new perceptions, attitudes, and preparation on the part of school personnel; it demands modifications in the curriculum content and delivery system of instruction. Clearly, such an extensive transformation cannot be accomplished overnight and will require careful planning in order to be implemented effectively. Several suggestions are offered in the next section, in support of these recommendations. They are based on the data derived by the writers from their interviews of migrant parents, children, and educators in Garden County.

In the present context, educators are so conditioned to look for academic, health, and other inadequacies in a transient child that they do not see the strengths and specialized skills he brings into the classroom as a result of his experiences. These qualities simply go to waste in a school environment which ignores prior learning and considers it irrelevant to the acquisition of abstract knowledge and skills. Yet, the knowledge, interests, and habits which a migrant boy or girl has gained in the field,

on the road and from his/her interactions with family members and other farm workers are all applicable to the school situation. They can be utilized systematically by teachers as natural bridges toward the development of generalized concepts and upgraded skills. In order to do so, however, the teachers must first accept the fact that a migratory youngster is not motivationally inferior. He is an exceptional learner only in the sense that he has not been exposed to the same range of experiences as those encountered by the typical learner. As the product of two diametrically divergent contexts of life, these two children naturally display different patterns of behavior. Once the negative perception of transient students as "disadvantaged" has been eradicated, then, educators will become receptive to the notion that the experiential context of these learners can provide rich opportunities for systematic learning at school. That the positive attributes of migrant life and experience tend to go unnoticed by teachers is not surprising, for they are seldom exteriorized in the alien environment of the school.

The Positive Attributes of a Migrant Child

We will discuss selected characteristics of migrant children, among others, which may provide an insight into the development of an alternative orientation toward migrant education. But such characteristics are only illustrative

and do not constitute an exhaustive list of migrant children's attributes. Though these are a consequence of farm migrants' adaptation to the social, economic, and physical contexts of their lives, they should not be overgeneralized.

Resiliency

First and foremost, the migrant child is a survivor, stubborn and proud; he has a flexible personality and is remarkably adaptable to change. Born to the ways of road, he is usually curious and alert, responding enthusiastically and kinetically, rather than verbally, to his surroundings. In addition, he is prone to unexpected shifts in mood, which one perceptive community-liaison specialist in one Garden County school district described in the following terms: "This type of kid has a lot of bounce...He can swing from a high to a low, and back again in one second flat...How else could he keep taking it on the chin without cracking up?" Indeed, how else could Dina, the gifted learner who had eventually become a lawyer, have coped with the frustrations of interrupted schooling?

These personality characteristics should serve as bases for the development of positive classroom interactions. Thus, a teacher could appeal to the learner's pride in order to spur his efforts toward the mastering of basic skills, provide him with exciting learning experiences to challenge

his curiosity in relation to school tasks, and allow him to act out his responses nonverbally as well as orally to help him gain confidence in his ability to communicate effectively in a class setting.

Independence

The traditional ages of people, as they are perceived in mainstream society, are not relevant to the migrant social context, where childhood lasts but one brief moment and teenage years are often nonexistent. In the migrant stream, every youngster receives early lessons in independence from his parents. A toddler follows his mother to the field as soon as he is able to walk; there he is encouraged to imitate her movements and to pick his share of the crop. By the age of seven, he is placed in charge of younger siblings and is soon able to care for them with matter-of-fact competence. When he turns twelve, he takes on the responsibility of a mature breadwinner and, with it, the attitudinal autonomy of a significant wage earner. This sense of security associated with working was what drove Gabriel, the emotionally disturbed youngster, repeatedly back to the fields each time he ran away from school. There, he no longer felt abandoned and helpless for, on this territory, he could earn his living and not be dependent on other people.

The habits of independence, responsibility, and

autonomy acquired by a transient child as a result of his upbringing do not vanish when he steps into the school. It is, therefore, pointless as well as counterproductive to treat him like his peer as an immature being to be conditioned gradually into a state of self-sufficiency which he has already reached. Instead, he should be given an opportunity to assume responsibilities in the classroom which are equal to his capability, to be involved in decision-making related to his learning goals, and to be exposed to academic information rendered meaningful to him by its application to the world of work. Such an approach would facilitate his adaptation to the educational context.

Work Habits

Because of his early and relentless introduction to shouldering a share of the family responsibilities in the camps, in the fields, and on the road, a migratory youngster internalizes readily his parents' work ethics and brings them into the classroom. This behavior was clearly evidenced by Carmen, the battered child, who managed somehow to do her school work, despite the intolerable stress of her home situation.

When a transient student is given a task to perform which he understands--and, therein lies the key to his success or failure-- he will show himself to be a good, reliable worker who will labor at his assignment eagerly and

steadily, and often with a stamina which belies his state of health. In order to reach his academic potential, however, he will need assistance over the hurdle of verbal directions. Both teacher modeling and factual demonstrations are instructional strategies consistent with his learning orientation. They should be utilized to reinforce teaching content and to ease his introduction to unfamiliar intellectual concepts.

Acquaintance with Existential Problems of Life

The migrant child has few illusions about the human condition, for he is in touch daily with the harsh realities of camp and road life. He has known hunger, fear and unemployment, and he has witnessed man's inhumanity to man. He is no stranger to birth and death, to adultery and desertion, to drinking and fighting. Nursery rhymes, legends, and fairy tales are not a part of his early life. Neither is the gamut of "crushes," puppy love, or romantic infatuation known by teenagers in later years, nor is the neatly ordered work of suburbia an experience accessible to him. What he brings into the classroom is a past littered with events from which his peers have been sheltered, and which most teachers cannot even begin to visualize. At the age of eleven, Gabriel had already witnessed more horror than most people would see in an entire life time. And he did not expect the future to bring him any better treatment

than the one he had experienced in the past.

When they are measured against a migrant boy or girl's firsthand knowledge of the seamy side of life, the contents of school books as well as the topics of classroom instruction are so restrained and so alien to the migrant life style that they are unlikely to capture student attention, unless they are introduced in such a way as to make sense to someone who has never led a sheltered, stable existence. In order to achieve this purpose, teachers need to provide meaningful links between the violent world of the migratory stream and the tame realm of Dick and Jane, people with nice families who live in nice homes, wear nice clothes, and eat nice meals three times a day. And here the classical concept of academic knowledge nurtured out of the learners' experiences, which was so successfully demonstrated by Sylvia Ashton-Warner with Maori children in New Zealand is directly relevant to migrant education (1963). Stories and vocabulary terms elicited from the students, for instance, may be written down by a teacher and, later on, used to teach reading. In fact, there already exists a source of "literature" meaningful to itinerant children, and one which would probably place traditional educators in a state of shock at the thought of using it: sensationalist tabloids, for none of their "lurid" articles would strike migrant youths as out of the ordinary. Such newspapers, therefore, could serve to

introduce printed matter to youngsters who hardly ever see any in the homes, and the relevance of their features contents to their lives might well motivate them to read.

Adaptability

Unable to escape from the unstable conditions of seasonal farm life and work, a migrant youngster becomes adept at adapting to them. Habitually, he is not a complainer, having been taught early in life the futility of rebelling against life's odds or of even acknowledging one's suffering or resentment against them. This ability to endure is what enables him to survive the school experience. It was this quality which enabled Rico to sit in class for months without complaint, and Carmen to withstand her mother's abuses in silence, despite the teacher's efforts to coax the information from her.

While schooling is, admittedly, a succession of traumatic episodes for the migrant child, it does bring him some temporary compensation in the form of decent surroundings, adequate health care, and abundant food. With the ease of physical comfort, the natural courage of the youngster is no longer needed to blot out the external threats to his well-being. It may then be redirected to control the anguish of unfamiliar academic learning. Here, it is the very novelty of the educational experience which makes it difficult for him to achieve dominance over its

stressful conditions in productive manner. If the child is shown the way to overcome the adverse element of schooling, he will not only endure them, but also learn to adapt to them in the same way that he adapts to the unpleasant physical conditions of his daily existence. Once he has conquered these obstacles, he may find the successful road to further schooling. Viewed in this perspective, academic learning can be presented to him as a journey into an exciting new world, one in which he will finally be able to play a familiar role--that of a traveler eager to discover what lies over the next hill.

Respect of Authority

In spite, or perhaps because, of the stresses to which they are subjected, migrant family members develop a strong sense of cohesion, loyalty and mutual obligations which extends to their coworkers or peers, when the group is being threatened by an outsider. This "we-they" dichotomy may, at times, conflict with the healthy respect for authority which every agricultural laborer has inculcated in his offsprings for his own benefit, as well as for their protection against a hostile world. When an art teacher in a migrant summer school program in Garden County attempted to discover the causes of a fight in class, children closed ranks automatically against him. But, although they made him feel like a stranger, they did not actually challenge his

authority, except with their silence and "blank" looks. At all other times, the teacher had found them respectful to him, eager to please, and ready to ply him with endless questions, revelatory of a vivid imagination. That they did so demonstrated that he had succeeded in establishing a very good rapport with them, a situation which he attributed to the informal atmosphere of a summer session open to a limited number of students. He believed that their behavior would have been less outgoing in the more rigid climate of a regular school year, when the presence of so many strangers would have aroused their ingrained cautiousness and increased their group solidarity as well as their outward conformity to authority.

Clearly, the traditional role of the teacher as an authority figure fulfills the migrant child's perception and expectation of an adult, for he is used to strong directives and swift retribution for nonperformance of an assigned task. Strong leadership tempered with personal warmth will, thus, provide these students with a much needed anchor in an unfamiliar environment. Under these conditions, a perceptive educator can begin to exploit the children's loyalty to each other as a reinforcement to collaborative learning, while encouraging them to explore individually different aspects of the common task. As long as authority remains visible and the integrity of the group is retained, experimentation with self-expression on the part of one or

more students will be easily accepted. In addition, it will serve the purpose of introducing the children to the challenge of working alone, something which most of them hate to do. With proper planning, the individualization of tasks within a group assignment can help a migrant youngster develop the unitary work habits which are essential to succeed in the academic context.

Motor Coordination

Except when he is physically disabled by a crippling disease, the migrant child displays good motor coordination, which he has acquired painstakingly through his early introduction to physical labor in the wake of his parents. Having learned as a toddler how to pick strawberries without crushing them, he has developed an unusual gift for tactile sensitivity which enables him to perform delicate tasks at an age when his more privileged peers are barely able to manage a pair of scissors. It was perhaps this unique quality which had created a bond between the art teacher and his class, as previously mentioned, and had subsequently resulted in a positive relationship between them. "They were good with their hands," he said, "and they didn't need too much help from me in putting things together."

In a society where athletes command so much public admiration, and technological advances require increasingly discriminative manual dexterity on the part of an

individual, any child endowed with special physical coordination represents a valuable asset to the society which should be systematically exploited on its behalf. At the primary grade level, where a strong relationship exists between motor performance and verbal materials, a youngster's sense of rhythm or his ability to manipulate materials should not only be utilized as a basis of motivation to encourage his continued practice of a discovered talent, but also be recognized in class as a means of stimulating his intellectual growth.

Sensitivity to Human Relations

The migrant child has grown up in an environment where words are used sparingly, and where interpersonal communication is guided by primarily subtle cues in body language. He is, therefore, observant and perceptive of those minute visual and auditory messages which underlie human interaction. His heightened sensitivity to unobtrusive signals enables him to "read" non-verbal cues accurately, and to size up new situations accordingly without reference to its often contradictory verbal context. It was undoubtedly this discriminating instinct which had permitted Gabriel to sense the beneficial atmosphere of the special class and Miss Fisher's desire to help him. It had made it possible for him to reveal to her the depth of his despair and fears, a step which had placed him once again in

touch with human beings and had broken the isolation which had been his refuge from the repeated "betrayals" of his family. Even in his state of stress, Gabriel had not lost his powers of observation.

When the transient youngster enters the school world, he is immediately overwhelmed by the flood of words unleashed upon him, and puzzled by the importance assigned to their face value by everyone around him. Unless he is coaxed out of his natural reserve by a perceptive teacher, he will retreat into silence in order to protect himself from the verbal assaults which threaten to overload his capacity for comprehension. Yet, in an academic context, where children's cognitive skills must be guided to encompass the acquisition of finite information, as well as the abstraction of basic principles from any given data, the ability to observe and interpret minute non-verbal signals in face-to-face interaction is not something to be ignored or handled casually. It is evidence of a capacity, on the part of the student, to pay attention to details, and one which can easily be transferred to other areas of endeavor. With proper training, such a child can be taught to extend his watchful habits first to the use of linguistic media as legitimate bridges between people, then, to a systematic decoding of those nuances in oral and written messages which are conveyed by the words themselves, in conjunction with unspoken signals. Once he has gained the ability to

concentrate his receptive skills on both the verbal and non-verbal contexts of communication, he will be ready to internalize their productive counterparts to achieve equal mastery in self-expression.

Experiential Knowledge

Life on the road and in the camps teaches the migrant child a kind of knowledge which is neither recognized nor appreciated in an educational setting, because it bears little resemblance to that on which school learning is based. One case in point will illustrate the situation:

Don, a migrant black boy of eleven, had acquired very few basic skills during five years of schooling, for he had been in and out of more schools than he could ever remember. Although he was then receiving instruction in remedial reading, he was still barely able to read third grade material.

Don never caused any trouble, but neither did he ever participate actively in the class. While the other children seemed to like him well enough, they sometimes made fun of him. The first few times that the boy had attempted to answer the teacher's questions, the other students had laughed at his answers because they had found his statements so ridiculous. Since then, Don no longer tried to answer at all. By now, no one, including himself, expected him to know or be capable of doing anything. And, there, the story

would have ended, were it not for a trivial occurrence which was to have an earthshaking repercussion on the life of the child and that of his teacher.

One morning, Miss Dayton was on her way to school when she caught sight of Don walking along the road. She stopped her car and invited him to ride with her. As he jumped into the car, she observed that the water level in the swampy inlet was very high that morning and might soon be over the road. "Oh, no," said Don, "the water never runs over the road. It just comes up to the line on that big rock, then it stops and goes down again." From then on and with little coaxing until they reached the school parking lot, the boy related an incredible amount of information to Miss Dayton about the swamp and the things that lived or were found in it. This time, Don was not at a loss for words and his face shone with open excitement, as he spoke of the things he knew so well. As she listened with spellbound fascination, the teacher realized with a sudden shock that here was a Don whom she did not really know, one who understood the ways of nature far better than she did herself. And, yet, neither she nor anyone else in school had ever suspected that the boy could be anything but a "disadvantaged" learner with limited academic potential.

Reflecting guiltily on her initial lack of sensitivity to Don, Miss Dayton decided to take her class on a field trip the next day to the swamp; there, she would let Don

demonstrate his knowledge of the area to the other students. The experience was a revelation to everyone, including Don himself. He felt at home on this territory and, for the first time, he found himself to be the central point of interest to the class, eagerly pointing things out to the other children and answering their questions without hesitation. It was an unquestionably masterful performance, and one which demonstrated the depth of the boy's knowledge about the swamp.

In the weeks that ensued, Miss Dayton referred back to some of Don's observations and used the information as a springboard for the exploration of new topics, making sure that he participated in the class discussions. She had him write about the swamp and found him books in which he could read more about swamp life. By the end of the year, his reading ability had progressed far beyond expectations and he was well on the way to catch up with the rest of the class.

The field trip had been a revelation to everyone, and had been a turning point in Don's educational career. On that day, a miracle had happened, and none of those who had been touched by it were ever to be the same again. For Don, a link had been established between his experience and school learning. For his peers, the boy had become an "authority" on swamp life never to be made fun of again; and for the teacher, had come a new understanding of migrant

children. Never again would she equate their unworldliness with ignorance.

Youngsters who, like Don, live in daily contact with nature acquire a great deal of information about the land, the seasons, the weather, plant and animal life. With encouragement they can talk readily and intelligently about any number of subjects related to their activities, such as the advantages and disadvantages of different crops, the various "picking" methods proven effective for specific produce, or the natural signs forecasting bad weather. But their specialized knowledge extends as well to other aspects of migrant life outside the experience of mainstream children and teachers. As our interviews of migrant families revealed, thereby reconfirming some of the observations made by Robert Coles (1971), the lore accumulated by transient children in the course of their travels encompasses such unusual knowledge as the following:

> They know whom to fear or distrust: policemen, immigration officials, farmers, crew leaders, confidence men, loan sharks, bill collectors, door to door salesmen, fake ministers, social workers and other "do-gooders," anyone formally dressed or wearing a uniform, and anyone displaying a "false" smile on his/her face. They also know how to talk to such people without giving away any information.
>
> They know how to fear and how to respect; they know how to work, how to conserve their physical energy, and how to survive in various circumstances.
>
> They know how to take care of each other, how to get food and water, how to buy cheap food, how to handle babies and sick people, how to light a stove and cook meals.

They know to the exact dollar how much money is needed to live through the day, how to stretch resources, how to live one day at a time, how to get by on very little.

They know how meanly adults can treat one another and, sometimes their own children; they know one can count on one's family for support, but not on outsiders who will take advantage of anyone if they can; they know the world is against them and no one really cares about them in the communities they pass through during their travels.

They know that it is difficult to relate to people who come from different areas and to get used to new places and ways of doing things.

They know that life is short and hard, and that one may be alive today, and dead tomorrow without being able to do anything about it.

They know that the worst crimes are to steal someone else's food and to fail to complete an assigned task.

They know how to repair a car, how to listen to an engine to diagnose its problems, and how to make emergency car repairs.

They know how to find their way on country roads, how to travel with minimum discomfort, and how to locate the necessities of life along the way.

They know how to assess people, how to tune in on their real self behind a smiling face, how to listen beyond words for hidden meanings, and how to hide their thoughts from them.

They know that school is another world and that, for a little while, they will have to adjust to it. They know that, for a few lucky ones, school will be a doorway to a better life, "out there" but that, for most of them, it will only be an interim place apart from the migrant stream.

These are knowledges which must be recognized, accepted, and utilized in the classroom if the child is to occupy his place in school, as a "different" learner perhaps, but not as one with a <u>tabula rasa</u> mind bereft of

worthwhile information. And, since transient boys or girls cannot be expected to discern the deviant nature of the precious facts they have accumulated through their travels, it is up to the teachers to learn the curriculum of the road, in order to contextualize academic instruction relevantly to their students' expectations. Unfortunately, only those who have worked in the migrant streams are conversant with the range and sequence of learning activities which constitute the curriculum of migrant life. Such specialized knowledge is, therefore, inaccessible to educators under current conditions in migrant education.

What Immediate Action Can Be Taken by the School?

The last two chapters have clearly established the fact that, despite its innovations, migrant education has been held back from its potential by its patchwork anchorage in a static educational system, where learning progresses in a prescribed, orderly sequence neatly and immovably spaced over a ten-month period. It was suggested that the entire program be viewed from a different perspective, one which would value migrant children as assets rather than as educational liabilities. Such an endeavor will certainly entail a large-scale reappraisal and reorganization of migrant education. It would have to originate in the central agency responsible for the financing and monitoring of instructional and other services offered to transient

students. This is the National Migrant Education Program in Washington, D.C.

In the meantime, however, common sense dictates that pragmatic measures need to be initiated now at the local school level, to replace the existing and inadequate compensatory approach used in class, with a more productive enrichment orientation designed to utilize the skills and knowledges of the migrant child to meet his special learning needs and problems. The feasibility of such a plan cannot be disputed, for it has already been advocated and experimented with throughout the nation in bilingual education and other programs for linguistically and culturally different students. In fact, its application to migrant education was already explored by Elizabeth Sutton (1966). She made a recommendation that teachers capitalize deliberately on the one dominant aspect of the transient child's life which sets him apart from his peers: mobility. She suggested that students be taught the values associated with travel and, along with them,the academic concepts related to these experiences. In this manner, learning would be extended beyond the school grounds, and continue to take place while the youngster moved from place to place with his family.

Eighteen years have now passed since Sutton made her proposal for the formulation of specialized strategies, intended to reconcile the constraints of migrant social life

incompatible with regular schooling. Today, one might presumably expect that some action would have been taken to actualize what appeared to be a sensible suggestion, and that a comprehensive curriculum of travel-related teaching units, with interchangeable learning packets centered on basic skills, would now be available throughout the nation. Such has not been the case, however, for as we systematically reviewed migrant education materials, visited schools in Garden County, and attended regional and national migrant conferences over the past four years, we were unable to discover evidence that the Sutton recommendations had ever been implemented. Whatever may have been the reason for this omission, this particular specialist's vision of a chid learning "on the move" was then, and still is today an inspired notion. Now, the time has come to admit its value and to reconsider its validity and feasibility in the "enrichment" framework which has been suggested in the present document. Until migrant education programs address the learning needs and characteristics of the target group as they <u>are</u> rather than as they "ought" to be, there is little hope of their achieving greater success than they have up to now in upgrading the academic achievement of transient students, and diversifying their career opportunities. To claim otherwise would be foolhardy in the face of such disastrous statistics as an average two-year grade retardation and an 85 percent drop-out rate in high school (Research Triangle Institute, 1981).

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